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THE WORKS

OF

JOHN ANGELL JAMES

ONEWHILE MINISTER OF THE CHURCH ASSEMBLING IN
CARRS LANE BIRMINGHAM

EDITED BY HIS SON.

VOL. VII.

THE COURSE OF FAITH (CONTINUED).
CHRISTIAN HOPE.

LONDON HAMILTON ADAMS & CO.
BIRMINGHAM HUDSON & SON.
MDCCCLXI.

THE CHRISTIAN GRACES
FAITH HOPE AND LOVE

BY

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THE COURSE OF FAITH

(Continued).

CHAPTER VI.

FAITH'S VICTORY OVER THE WORLD.

THE situation and circumstances of the Christian during his state of discipline and probation upon earth, are singularly, awfully, and perilously, critical. His attention is divided between two worlds. He is placed amidst the scenes, the duties, the possessions, the trials of the one, all of which are ever appealing to the senses, and urging their claims upon the faculties and instincts of our nature, claims which he cannot, dare not, altogether resist or neglect; and yet amidst these objects always present to him, he is, upon peril of his immortal soul, supremely to value, pursue, and enjoy the objects of the other world, of which he knows nothing but by report. He must not neglect one just and proper interest of this life, to which he is related by ties both various and tender; and yet he must regard, practically and constantly, as his highest interest, the life that is to come. He must, to a certain extent, mind the things on earth, and yet his affections must be set on things in heaven: the visible must not be neglected, yet the invisible must be supremely regarded: the temporal must be attended to in due season and measure, and yet the eternal must predominate. If this is easy, nothing is difficult. If this can be readily accomplished, how is it that so few succeed in accomplishing it?

What is the mighty principle which shall arbitrate between the claims of these two rival worlds on man's affections; give to each its due; and so enable him to attend to the present, as not to encroach upon the future? Faith. It is for want of this, such multitudes who escape the snares of vice, and the other ways to perdition, which are ever open and always crowded, are still lost. If immorality slays its thousands, the world slays its ten thousands. In every Christian land, worldliness is the most thronged road to everlasting ruin. The supreme love of the world will as certainly lead its possessor to the bottomless-pit as the love of sin; for "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." Yet with how much of general reputation, amiable disposition, and social excellence, may this supreme regard to things seen and temporal be associated. Worldliness, I repeat, and repeat with emphasis, is the smoothest, the genteelest, the most respectable path to the bottomless pit. Nor does this worldliness consist merely of an intense love of money, and an excessive eagerness to be rich, but as I shall presently show, in such a supreme regard to the visible and the temporal, whether in the quiet scenes of domestic comfort, or in the acquisition or display of wealth, as leads a man to seek his highest bliss in them.

The danger of destructive worldliness arises then, not only from the adaptation of surrounding objects to our senses, our tastes, and our appetites, but from the necessity we are under to pay some attention to them, and from the difficulty of ascertaining what the precise

measure of that attention should be; and also from the proneness there is in us to make this duty and this difficulty an excuse for a supreme and exclusive regard to earthly objects. Yet they can be no excuse, for we have a volume in our possession, which commands us in the name, and with the authority, of God, not to love the world, but to set our affections on that other world, the certainty of whose existence it establishes, and the glory of whose objects it reveals. Let us be surrounded by what earthly objects we may, or occupied by what present duties in reference to them we may, there is a voice ever sounding in our ears the solemn mandate, "Love not the world, love not the world." "By the nobler part of our nature, we are placed in the most solemn relations to another economy. And not to have a deep sense of this fact, implies that something is enormously wrong. This immortal spirit was appointed but for a few years to this earth; but eternally to another state. And it is placed in relations, comporting with its eternity of existence, to God the one infinite Being, the one, sole, perfect and independent Essence; to the Redeemer, the Lord, and the life of the new Economy; to an unseen state; to an order of exalted, holy, and happy beings in that state; to a pure, exalted, and endless felicity in that state. And do I give, in conformity to one law of my nature, a great measure of my affection to the things to which I have a subordinate temporary relation, and refuse affection towards those to which I have an eternal relation? How marvellous and how lamentable that the soul can consent to stay in the dust, when invited above to the stars; having in its own experience the demonstration that this is not its world; knowing that even if it were,

the possession will soon cease; and having a glorious revelation and a continual call from above."*

I have already said there is a principle by which the due subordination of things seen and temporal, to things unseen and eternal, may be maintained. The apostle confirms my assertion, where he says, "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." By the world, in this passage, you are to understand all the objects of earth: wealth, honour, pleasure, renown; the favour or the wrath of man; the scenery of nature, and the objects of science; some things unlawful in their nature, and others unlawful only when supremely regarded; in short, to use the expression of the apostle already quoted, things seen and temporal, as distinguished from things unseen and eternal. Such is the world that assails the Christian, and which he must overcome or perish eternally.

The world is a foe which attacks us in various places; in the shop, by all the temptations incident to trade and wealth; in the halls of legislation and public business, by all the enticements to pride and ambition; in the places of amusement, by all the soft blandishments of pleasure; in the haunts of vice, by all the gratifications of appetite; in the scenes of nature, by all the delights of taste and imagination; in the walks of science and literature, by all the delights of intellectual gratification; in the social circle, by all the enjoyments of friendship; and in the domestic retreat, by all the sweets of connubial bliss. Oh, how many are the scenes where the world meets man and subdues him! And how many also are its weapons and its

* Foster's Lectures.

methods of attack! There are its examples, how numerous, how various, and some of them how fascinating; and as our manners and habits are so much formed by imitation, how difficult it is with such models perpetually before him, for the believer always to preserve the purity, the integrity, and the beneficence of the Christian character! There are the false principles and loose maxims of a relaxed morality, so plausibly defended and so widely circulated as to conceal their sinfulness, and to come recommended by a warrant and authority which it is difficult to resist. Sometimes the world approaches the believer with a smiling face, making promises and offering caresses, like the serpent to our first mother in the garden, or like Satan to our Lord when he said, "All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me." How difficult is it on such occasions to turn away from the fair enchantress, to keep the eye steadily fixed on heavenly glories, and instead of greedily quaffing the cup of poisoned sweets, to dash it on the ground! At other times, the world attacks by persecution; in some cases by cruelty and rage, and in others by ridicule and scoffs. We have not to fear the path of blood or fire, but though the scaffold and the stake are, we hope, for ever gone, how often are believers called for conscience sake to endure the indignation of friends, the loss of public favour, or the malignant raillery of those whose conduct has been reproved, and whose consciences have been aroused, by their holy and consistent conduct! How hard is it to bear such treatment with patience and resignation, and to hold fast the principles and conduct which have incurred it! How many are there whose good resolutions have been shaken by the mockeries

and insults with which libertines have treated the pious; by the malignant and diabolical pleasure with which they have seized upon the smallest failings of the believer, and held them up to the public gaze with bitter scorn and wicked exaggeration! How many are there, who, afraid of the railleries and scoffs which attend an inflexible adherence to duty, have abandoned that firm and independent deportment which becomes the Christian; have striven on almost every point to accommodate their conduct to that of the world; and have endeavoured, by means which have marred their peace and wounded their conscience, to diminish the contrast which ought ever to subsist between the lives of the pious and the impenitent. The world assails and vanquishes many, and wounds if it does not destroy others, by places and offices of public trust and duty. Senatorial, magisterial, and municipal honours and responsibilities, have in many cases been a sad snare to professing Christians. They have been by these means, thrown into associations, and exposed to temptations, which have proved lamentably detrimental to the spirit of godliness. Not that Christian men ought altogether to retire from such offices, and leave public affairs to be guided and governed by the wicked. It is a question, however, whether they should ambitiously covet and seek them. If God in his providence call them to such slippery places, and they give themselves to prayer to be kept from evil, and firmly maintain the integrity and consistency of the Christian character, they may, by their example and their influence, be great public blessings. But how difficult is this! How few have surmounted the difficulty, and come unscathed from the conflict with the world in such scenes as these!

Let me now inquire what is the victory over the world of which the apostle speaks, and how is it to be obtained.

By what language shall I make this plain? This is extremely difficult, since, as I have said, some attention and attachment to the world may be legitimately indulged, and are even commanded. But though there cannot be an entire disregard to the things of this world, there may be a subordinate one: and though also there cannot be an exclusive regard to the things of the next world, there may be a supreme one. It is obvious there cannot be two supreme affections. A true Christian loves God in Christ supremely, for he is required to love him with all his heart, and soul, and mind. Consequently, the world is never conquered till the love of it is brought into subordination to this due regard to God. This is the victory, the supreme love of the world displaced by the supreme love of God. And then, as the love of God is in a real Christian the supreme affection; so a concern for salvation is the supreme solicitude: as in the former case, there may be many subordinate affections, so in the latter, there may be many subordinate anxieties; but that which controls the one is a higher regard to the claims of God, and that which controls the other is a higher regard to eternal salvation. Many no doubt have written and spoken on this subject, as if the love of God actually and entirely extinguished all other affections, instead of merely subordinating them: so much so that a considerate reader or hearer has said to himself, "That is impossible," or "absurd." It is absolutely contrary to reason and disserviceable to religion to write and preach as if the world had no claims at all upon us. It has

claims, and will make them good in defiance of any disallowance of them. They must be allowed, ought to be allowed. To attempt to render the heart insensible to them is to do violence to nature, without doing honour to grace. It is not merely to vanquish the foe and to take him captive, but it is to give no quarter, to murder him. This then is the victory over the world, to subordinate it to God.

This, however, is the lowest ground on which a man can justly deem himself a Christian. Surely no one can pretend to this character who has not this exalted and supreme affection. Christ came "to redeem us from this present evil world;" but if the world has the government of our affections: if we are still enslaved by a supreme regard for it, where is the evidence of our redemption? Many persons profess to be in considerable doubt and perplexity as to the state of the case with them, whether since they may love the world in measure, their love on this point is supreme or subordinate. They ought not to have any doubt as to this, and they would not have any if they had more knowledge and more spirituality. The doubts of some professors ought to be certainties, but certainties of the most fatal kind. The very careless, unfeeling, and unanxious manner in which they are expressed, too plainly shows how well-founded they are. The doubts and fears of others, by the deep and trembling solicitude with which they are expressed, indicate that it is want of knowledge rather than of piety, to which they are to be traced. In most cases of comparison, decision is a matter of prompt and unequivocal consciousness. And it should be so here. And why is it not? I would send the Christian to his Bible and his heart, with a

sincere and earnest desire to know the meaning of the former and the state of the latter, and let him then attend to the following direction given by Foster in his Lecture on "The Supreme Attachment due to Spiritual Objects." "Let a man take the occasion to examine, when he is very strongly interested by some one temporal object or concern, whether he can say, More than all this is the interest I feel in 'the things that are above.' When he is greatly pleased with some temporal possessions, or success, or prospect, and his thoughts suddenly turn to the higher objects, is he then decidedly more pleased? or does he feel a deep and earnest solicitude that this temporal good may not injure him in his higher interests? If he suffers or apprehends something very grievous as to his temporal interests, does he deliberately feel that he would far rather suffer so, than in his spiritual interests? Or again, in such a case, does he feel a strong overbalancing consolation from 'things above?' Is he more pleased to give the earnest application of his mind to the higher objects and interests than to any inferior ones? As a man digging in the confidence he should find gold, would labour with more soul and spirit than one raising stones or planting trees. Does he feel that, on the whole, he would do more, or sacrifice more, for the one than for the other? While greatly interested in a temporal pursuit, does he habitually charge it upon his soul, and actually endeavour that he do with still greater intenseness prosecute a higher object? If he perceives that his pursuit of a temporal object is beginning to outrun (if we may so speak) his pursuit of the nobler, does he solemnly intermit in order that this may not be the case? 'How vigorously I am pursuing this, but

what is that which I am leaving behind? If I leave that behind, it will stay! It will run no race with a worldly spirit. Let me instantly draw in!' Is he constantly, or very often, impelled to the Divine throne to implore grace and strength that there may be a decided preponderance? the witness for him 'above' that there is that proof at least of his affections there? If, by the advance of life, he is sensible that he is fast going out of the 'things on the earth,' does he rise above all regret at this, in the view of the sublimer objects? 'Do you compassionate me because I am growing old, because I cannot stay long here? You mistake! Yonder is the scene to which I am animated in approaching.' We will only add, in his occupation and transactions with the 'things on the earth,' has he acquired the habit of imparting even to those concerns a principle and a reference still bearing toward the higher objects? Such questions as these would be the points for placing and keeping the subject in a state of trial and proof; would be an admonition, too, of the necessity of applying all the force in the higher direction."

I may put the matter also in another form. Which is the object that a man knows he supremely desires, the blessings of salvation or the possessions of earth? Which of these yield him most delight? Which of them does he congratulate himself most upon possessing? Which does he consider his portion? Which, when the two come into collision, and he must imperil the one by sin, or the other by principle, is made to give way; will he give up religious principle for gain, or gain for religious principle? Which distresses him

most in the fear of losing it, his salvation or his property; and the loss of which does he deprecate with most intense dread? Which habitually guides his thoughts and feelings, and moulds his character? The victory over the world is, this subordination in the state of our mind, of the creature to the Creator; of earth to heaven; of temporal blessings to spiritual ones; of time to eternity. It is the formation of an unearthly, spiritual, divine, and heavenly character!

It may be proper to observe, that this victory does not refer exclusively to the subjugation of the world in one of its shapes and modes of assault only, but in them all. It is not a victory over covetousness, or the love of wealth merely; or over a love of pleasure merely; or over the love of ambition only; but equally over the quiet and supreme love of our home comforts and our dearest relations. There may be, as I have already shown, the world in the house as well as in the shop. There is something so lovely in seeing a husband and wife withdrawing from the gay circles of fashionable life, and in their sweet and quiet home, giving themselves up to the enjoyment of each other's society, and the company of their children, and exercising all their ingenuity to make that scene pleasant and to find their happiness upon their own domestic hearth, that one feels unwilling to write a syllable to its disparagement; but fidelity both to God and to them requires and demands that it should be said, that there is one form of the world, though its best form, and if even this be loved more than God, the dark cloud of the Divine displeasure covers that household. The victory over the world is not gained in that case, and the words

of Scripture hold good there, "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him:" and not having the love of God, that lovely pair must be ejected from their paradise, under God's sentence of displeasure, as Adam and Eve were from theirs. Even into that scene Jesus Christ enters with the question, "Lovest thou me more than these?" Another remark which it is of importance to make is, that the Word of God speaks of a victory rather than an entire conquest. In the military affairs of earth this distinction is ever seen. An enemy is often beaten when he is not conquered, and the hero who has defeated him, may still, after he has gained one victory, have to fight for another; or there may be the drawn battle, or the victory but just won, instead of the complete triumph, and the absolute rout and dispersion of the foe. There are all these varieties in the Christian's spiritual conflict with the world. This foe is never entirely conquered till just before the victory is obtained over "the last enemy, which is death." The Christian's final triumph over the world is upon the borders of the grave, when he surrenders possessions, relatives, and even the very love of life itself, to the will of God, and feels the last remains of attachment to things seen and temporal, dissolving in the hope of things unseen and eternal. And before this final triumph, how various is the fight! In many cases it is almost a drawn battle. It is difficult almost to say whether he has subdued the world, or the world him. How little advantage does he seem to gain over his enemy. And where the advantage is on his side, how slight is it. In what strength does the foe yet remain. How his affections still cleave to things

below! How the cares, the comforts, and the snares of the world still beset him!

"How cold and feeble is his love,
How negligent his fear;
How low his hopes of heaven above,
How few affections there."

If he is successful in keeping down the love of money, how difficult is it for him to keep down the love of home, and to keep up the love of Christ!

I now proceed to show how faith acts so as to obtain this victory over the world.

This is an interesting and important part of the subject, to every real Christian. He is aware of his danger from the strength, subtlety, and ever-present activity of this enemy of his soul. There is not, there cannot be, a true believer who is not aware of this. The man who is careless, confident, and secure; who is unapprehensive, unanxious, unconcerned; who sees no danger, and feels no alarm from the things of the world; who gives himself to unmolested ease and undisturbed enjoyment; who wishes to be let alone to take his fill of pleasure or of comfort; and desires to have no idea of peril and to hear no call to arms and to conflict, cannot be a Christian. He is one of those of whom the apostle speaks, "who mind earthly things." The sincere and devout believer, on the contrary, is sensible of his perilous condition. "The world," he says, sometimes, in alarm amounting to distress, "the world is my great foe under which I sometimes fear I may sink vanquished, and lose my portion in the next state, by undue attention to the concerns of this. I am sometimes in danger from business, at others from domestic

ease; and at others from anxiety. I find the love of things seen and temporal creeping over me, and enfeebling all my religious principles. Tell me, O tell me, how I may best resist and overcome this foe." Not by retiring from it into monasteries and convents, as some do. This is not to conquer the enemy, but to flee from him; and is a cowardly retreat, in which of itself there is neither piety nor virtue. Nor will troubles always do it. Afflictions, no doubt, have been in some cases, sanctified for this end; and sufferers in the dark season of their woe, when the objects of their regard have been removed from them, have learnt by bitter experience how foolish and vain it was to set their affections on things below. At the grave of a friend, amidst the wreck of their fortunes, or in the chamber of sickness, the mask of the gay deceiver has fallen off, and the world has stood before them a convicted cheat. In some cases disgust with life has followed, and the poor wretched victim of disappointment has exclaimed, "It is better for me to die than to live, for there is not now a single object upon earth to make existence any longer desirable." This is being conquered by grief, instead of conquering the world. There are, however, better cases than this, of really sanctified worldly trials. There have been Christians, whose trials have been eminently blessed to their souls, whose graces never appeared in vigour while the sun of prosperity was shining upon them, but which came out upon their darkened skies, like stars upon the brow of night. They said with the Psalmist, "It was good for me to be afflicted, for before I was afflicted, I went astray." But this is not always the case. In most instances the loss of one worldly pos-

session only makes the heart cling closer to those that are left. Instead of repairing to the fountain when one cistern is broken, most set themselves busily to hew out another, or go to some other which is still left. It may be salutary to remind those who need the caution, not to trust to the season and hours of affliction, for they may never come. God may give them up to unsanctified prosperity. He may in anger say, "They are tied to their idols, let them alone." Besides, shall we tempt God to wean us in this way from the world? Shall we provoke him to remove from us objects that have alienated us from him? Shall we place him under a kind of necessity to save our souls by taking away the snares that endanger them? Shall we choose this way of gaining the victory? I know this is infinitely better than losing our souls. Yes, better to be stripped of all, and become poor as Job upon the dunghill, than to come short of eternal life: but is there not a more excellent way, a way more dignified, more consonant with our comfort, more pleasing to God, more effectual in itself? There is. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." Yes, our faith. This is a weapon that suits all hands, and is adapted to all occasions. In whatever form, or in whatever force, the foe advances, this can meet him and defeat him. By this, martyrs have triumphed, when he came armed with all the terrors of the scaffold and the stake. By this, kings, men of wealth and persons of renown have triumphed, when the enemy came arrayed with smiles, caresses, and blandishments. By this, men of business have triumphed, when he came dexterously wielding corrupt principles, maxims, and examples. Turn to the eleventh chapter of the Hebrews, that trophy-house of the

Church, and see how this mighty weapon gained the victories there recorded.

But I have not pointed out in what lies the power of faith for this purpose.

Faith conquers by recognising a new authority. The world, with the authority of a king, ruler, and master, exercises dominion over the souls of its vassals. With the voice of command it says, "Yield allegiance to me." It asserts its right to govern, and the soul of the worldly concedes the right and obeys; and his servant he is whom he obeys. But faith believes in God and in Christ. The Christian sees that the world is not only a tyrant, but a usurper. He realises the fact of the Lordship of Christ, and transfers his allegiance to him. "Other lords have had dominion over me," says he, "but by thee only will I be called." He breaks the yoke off from his neck, and takes up that of Christ. Christ says to him, "Love not the world, love me. If any man love father or mother; son or daughter; houses or lands, more than me, he is not worthy of me." "I yield," says the Christian, "I believe that thou art my Lord." The whole current of the Scripture's commands runs against the love of the world. It is forbidden in every form possible. Precept after precept is delivered against it, and faith recognises their rightful authority. Christian, open thine ears and hear, the voice of authority follows thee every where, forbidding a supreme regard to the objects of time and sense. In the house, in the shop, in the place of enjoyment, in social scenes, in solitary contemplation upon thy possessions, in the beautiful scenery of nature, this voice is ever saying, "Love not the world."

2. But authority is somewhat stern, and there re-

quires something more soft and tender to overcome the world; and therefore faith exhibits new and superior objects of contemplation and affection. There is, of course, some glory in the things of the world, and the mind will be enamoured of it till a superior glory is seen. Glowworms are bright in the absence of the moon and the stars; and the moon and the stars, in the absence of the sun. But when the great luminary rises, how glowworms, and stars, and moon, all disappear, lost in the blaze of his meridian glory. So it is with the world; how important, how beautiful, how glorious it is, while the soul sees not the spiritual objects of the Word of God! What is there better or brighter to the worldling than the world? Consequently his whole soul is engrossed by this. It is his all. But when faith comes, a new world (and what a world!) opens to his view. A man coming up from a mine, who had all his life lived there, and knowing nothing better than the objects which he had seen under ground, all at once beholding the glorious sun and all the beauties of the earth's surface would not experience a transition really greater than that of the man who after having seen and known nothing but worldly things, at length comes by faith to look at things spiritual and eternal. But what are those objects that by an irresistible attraction draw away his heart from the world? There is God in the harmony and glory of his perfections. What an object He is! How the believer delights to meditate upon God! His desire is towards him, and the remembrance of his name. He had heard of God before, he now rejoices in him. But it is God in Christ that may be said to be the especial object of faith. Hence, the noble and sacred enthusiasm of

the apostle, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." How many have repeated the same, and added the words of the poet.

"It was the sight of thy dear cross
First wean'd my soul from earthly things,
And taught me to esteem as dross
The mirth of fools and pomp of kings."

It is not for the dark mind of the worldling, and scarcely for the lukewarm professor, to imagine the glory which an enlightened and warm-hearted believer sees in the cross of Christ. How all the splendour of earthly things pales before that infinitely more resplendent object! It rises upon the soul like another sun, bright in itself, and diffusing its lustre over every thing else upon which it shines. With that stupendous object is connected the brightest manifestation of the Divine character, in harmony with the sinner's salvation. That is the central point of the Divine administration in creation, providence, and redemption. On that tree, of death to the Saviour, but of life to the sinner, grow the fruits of eternal mercy, the blessings of grace and glory. There are pardon, peace, holiness, and eternal life. All this is realised by faith, and only by faith. How the world fades into darkness, and dwindles to an almost invisible point before that object! The true believer often contemplates the end of the world, and the scenes of the judgment. "He represents to himself the vision (not from a melancholy fancy, or crazed brain, but from a rational faith, and a sober, well-instructed mind,) of the world dissolving, monar-

chies and kingdoms breaking up, thrones trembling, crowns and sceptres lying as neglected things. He hath a telescope through which he can behold the glorious appearance of the Supreme Judge; the solemn state of his majestic person; the splendid pomp of his magnificent and vastly numerous retinue; the obsequious throng of glorious and celestial creatures doing homage to the Eternal King; the swift flight of his royal guards, sent forth into the four winds to gather the elect, and covering the face of the heavens with their spreading wings; the universal silent attention of all, to that loud sounding trumpet that shakes the pillars of the world, pierces the inward caverns of the earth, and resounds from every part of the encircling heavens; the many myriads of joyful expectants arising, changing, putting on glory, taking wing, contending upwards to join themselves to the triumphant heavenly host; the judgment set; the books opened; the frightful amazed looks of surprised wretches; the adjudication of all to their eternal states; 'The heavens rolled up as a scroll; the earth and all things that are therein consumed and burnt up.' All this is seen by faith, through the telescope of the Scriptures. And now what spirit when he sees this, is there more left in the Christian towards the trivial affairs of this vanishing world. Though he will not neglect the duty of his own place, he is heartily concerned to have the knowledge and fear of God more generally obtained in this apostate world; and is ready to contribute his utmost regular endeavours for the preservation of common peace and order in subserviency thereunto: yet abstractedly from these considerations, he is no more concerned who is uppermost, than one

would passing by a swarm of flies, which hath the longest wings, or which excels the rest in sprightliness and briskness of motion."*

Nor is this all, for faith realises the glory of an eternal world. It believes the certainty of another world. The true Christian no longer clings to this world, because he has nothing better to grasp; no longer feeds upon husks, because he knows not where to obtain bread. He believes in heaven and eternity. These objects are matters of belief, not of speculation; substantial realities, not airy visions. He says, "I know in whom I have believed, and that I am not following cunningly devised fables." I am standing upon a rock, not quicksand. And as faith realises the certainty, so it does the glory of the eternal world. "Life and immortality are brought to light by the gospel." The representations of the celestial world contained in the Scriptures have a magnificence about them, which, though but dim transparencies, throw into darkness the brightest splendours of this world, as tapers held up amidst the effulgence of the mid-day sun.

3. But faith produces a new affection, as well as recognises new objects. It not only sees those objects, but seeing them, desires them, loves them, enjoys them. Whosoever is born of God overcomes the world; and a new life, love, and taste are brought into the soul by faith. One love is supplanted by another. Make a new bed for a river, deeper and wider than its former one, and the stream will instantly leave its old channel, and flow in the new one. Religion is not all intellect, contemplation, but it is also affection. The faith which perceives these new objects works by love. It embraces

* Howe on the "Vanity of Man as Mortal."

them, and lets all other matters go. The heart that was once under the power of supreme love to the world, comes under the influence of supreme love to God. And there is no love apart from faith. It is its genuine fruit, and grows on no other stock. We do, we shall, we must, love the world, till this divine principle gives us something better to love. The soul of the unrenewed man is blind to the beauty of spiritual objects, and therefore loves them not; but when spiritually illumined to see not only their reality, but their excellence, he turns away from the poor, meagre, unsatisfying things of earth and sense, to the more precious and glorious things of God, Christ, heaven, and eternity.

4. Faith, by uniting the soul to Christ, derives grace and strength for the conflict and the victory. It is not by his own power, the vigour of his intellect, the inflexibility of his purpose, the deductions of his reason, that he gains advantage over the world: these are all employed, because to exercise them is the nature of a rational creature; but it is his vital union with the Saviour that gives him the victory. He is a branch of the living vine, a member of Christ's mystical body, and is ever deriving life from him, the fountain and source of life. He is "strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." He is powerful, through the grace that is in Christ Jesus. "Be of good cheer," he says, "I have overcome the world." But what is this to us? Suppose a giant should say to a little child, trembling in front of a lion, "Do not be afraid; I have overcome a lion." "Ah," says the little creature, "but what is that to me? Will you slay the animal for me?" "I will," he answers; "depend upon me." Now this is Christ's meaning. "I have overcome the world not for

my sake only, but for yours. I have, by conquering the world, not only set the example, but obtained the means, for you to conquer it too." Through all this mighty conflict, the believer keeps his eye fixed on Christ, not only to see what he did, but to derive from what he did grace to do likewise. He says to us, "Do not be afraid of the world. It is not an invincible enemy. It has been conquered. I have overcome it; so may you. I did it for you, and have weakened its power. You fight with a wounded, beaten foe. Believe in me. My victory shall insure yours."

But here two things must be mentioned.

1. It must be a real, and not a mere nominal faith, to achieve this victory. It is not enough to say you have faith. It is not a verbal assent, a hereditary or educational faith, a cold opinion, a notion, or what the Scripture calls a dead faith; which, in fact, is no faith at all. It must be a faith of the heart, the operation of the Spirit, a real, practical conviction of the truth of the gospel. A belief that answers to the apostle's definition, "Which is the confidence of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." This will enable us to meet an objection made sometimes to our statements on this subject: "We do not see those who profess to have this principle, gaining the victory over the world." True: and just because they are professors only, but not partakers of this grace. Theirs, in many cases, is but the dead faith of a dead soul.

2. This victory will be obtained only in proportion to the strength and degree of the faith that gains it. I have already observed, that victory is a thing of degrees, from the merely maintaining our

ground, to a complete conquest. And this holds good here. A feeble belief will only just enable the Christian to avoid being completely beaten by the world. And we see many in this condition. Here is one professor, of whom we cannot but hope the root of the matter is in him. He is upon the whole, though not wholly, a Christian. There is so much of worldliness mixed up with his affections and pursuits, that it is sometimes difficult either for himself or his friends to ascertain the reality of his religion. Now, how is this? Just because his belief of Divine truth is so feeble. Here is another who has many distinguished excellences; many of the graces of the Christian character; much spirituality, meekness, and general good conduct; but he is sadly deficient in liberality: he has a tendency to covetousness; he loves his money too much. And this is by no means an uncommon thing in the church of Christ. How comes it? Why, his faith is weak. He does not believe what God says about money with the strength of conviction he should. The victory will and must be gained, in proportion to the means of gaining it: so that if the foe gain the advantage over us in any one particular, or in any one degree, it is because in that one particular or degree we are deficient in this sound practical belief.

Let us, then, engage in this part of the Christian life with sincere intentions, deep seriousness, and intense earnestness. Of the three great enemies of our souls, the world, the flesh, and the devil, while we are in danger from all, we are, I repeat, most in danger of the first. It is the most decent and the most trodden path to hell. It is a path not only through the wilderness without the church, but through the very garden of that sacred enclosure: a path not only thronged by those who make

no profession, but by those who do: a path which though it be strewed with flowers, leads, like every other, to perdition, and ends in the bitter pains of eternal death.

You may be entreated, as a guard against this sin of worldliness, to consider the short-lived existence, as well as unsatisfying nature, of all earthly things. It would be well for you to ponder the question of the prophet to some of old, "And where will ye leave your glory?" Yes, it must all be left, whatever it be you gain, whether wealth, honour, or relations, it must all be left. Oh, that you would consider and say, as you look round upon the various objects of your pursuits, "'Why am I so anxious to get what I must leave eventually, and may leave soon? This, and this, is what I am to leave. It has no one relation to me so positive as this, that I shall leave it. So near as I am now to it, I may the next moment come to behold it at an infinite distance: and so dear and important as it is now felt to be to me, to-morrow it may be absolutely nothing to me: and when I have left it, what consequence will it be to me, who is the person that rushes across my fresh grave to seize it?' Yes, rich men must leave their glory. Where? where? Why often to the curses of the poor, the extravagance of the gay, and the greedy joy of heirs, that care not though they are lifting up their eyes in torments, the subjects of 'That loudest laugh of hell, the pride of dying rich.'"* Open the grave, examine skeletons, there is no distinction there. Skulls wear neither diadems of gold, nor wreaths of honour. Bones retain not vests of purple and gold: or if they did, how worthless a consideration

* See a striking Lecture on this text in "Foster's Second Series."

would it be to the spirits once associated with them, wherever they may be, whether in heaven or in hell.

But I choose rather to direct your attention to the cultivation of a stronger faith in God, in Christ, in heaven, in eternity. Faith is a mightier conqueror of the world than even death. We shall do far more to gain the victory by looking up into heaven than by looking down into the grave. The glories of the one will do more to draw us away from earth, than the terrors of the other to drive us from it. We must be allured not terrified to that brighter and better world, which is attracting to itself all that is holy in this. We must place ourselves more habitually in that part of the temple of inspiration where the Holy Spirit has lavished the riches of his wisdom, in depicting the glory to be revealed, and feel our love, hope, and enjoyment of earthly things die within us, in the vision and anticipation of heavenly ones. We must not only fancy ourselves looking out of our graves upon the things which now so absorb and please us, but looking down upon them from the celestial sphere of glorified immortals. Time must be redeemed from things seen and temporal, to meditate upon things unseen and eternal. We must resist an encroaching world, and eluding its grasp, enter into our closet, and shut the door, and commune with our Father who sees in secret. We must thus increase our faith. Nothing else will give us the victory, and this will.

CHAPTER VII.

THE EXERCISE OF FAITH IN PRAYER.

"The Prayer of Faith." How simple an expression; yet how impressive! How beautiful the words; how mighty the thing! What has not the prayer of faith done? How great the wonders it has wrought, how numerous and how splendid the victories it has won! "It has subdued kingdoms; wrought righteousness; obtained promises; stopped the mouths of lions; quenched the violence of fire; escaped the edge of the sword; out of weakness was made strong; waxed valiant in fight; turned to flight the armies of the aliens." These are only part, and a small part, of its achievements, for it has stopped the sun in his course; opened and shut heaven; performed miracles without number; and raised to heaven countless millions of immortal souls, once sunk in sin under the power of Satan. Nothing seems too hard or too difficult for prayer to do. It has a kind of omnipotence; for it moves the hand that moves all things. All Scripture is full of injunctions, directions, examples, encouragements, and promises, in reference to this exercise. The Bible is "The Book of Common Prayer" for the universal church; the Liturgy for "the communion of all saints." How interesting a theme! And how

important it is we should thoroughly understand it! I bring into this subject two distinct things, faith and prayer; I unite them together, and consider faith in prayer. Though distinct, they are inseparable: there can be no true prayer without faith, there can be no true faith without prayer. They are the two arms by which the soul hangs upon the neck of infinite love, and grasps the hand of omnipotent power. Or to adopt another figure: they are in the new creature, what the organ of speech, and its utterance, are in the human body. Faith is the spiritual organ of the soul's power of language in prayer, and prayer is the emission of its spiritual articulate sounds. There is no dumb faith, no dead prayer.

It is not necessary to dwell on prayer, either as a duty or a privilege. It is felt by the true Christian to be both. All the children of God, in whatever else they differ, are alike in this respect. From the moment they have any religious life they pray. Just as the first sign of life in an infant when born into the world, is the act of breathing, so the first act of men and women, when they are born again, is praying. And it is as much a part of their new nature to pray, as it is of a child to breathe. God has no dumb children. And to carry on this homely figure, as diseased lungs in the human frame bring on decay, consumption, and death, so in the soul's economy, neglect of prayer is a spiritual decline. The purposes of prayer are various; it is the homage of a dependent creature paid to the author of its being, and the source of its happiness; it has a moral reflex influence on the soul of him that presents it, making him the holier by his devotions; it is a relief and comfort to the troubled soul; it is the

intercourse and communion of the regenerated soul with its Divine Parent; and it is God's own instituted means of obtaining blessings from him the Fountain of life. All these ends and purposes should be contemplated by the Christian, and not merely the last one. It is an exercise which comprehends many things. The conditions of prevailing prayer are numerous and impressive. It must be sincere, we must really be desirous to obtain the blessings we ask: it must be holy, for if we "regard iniquity in our heart, the Lord will not hear us:" it must be godly, seeking to obtain blessings, not for our own gratification merely, but for God's glory: it must be importunate, for it is the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man that prevails: it must be submissive, asking only for what it is God's will to bestow: it must be in charity, for if our brother has aught against us, we must first go and be reconciled to our brother: it must be reverent, for our God is a consuming fire: it must be humble, for we are mean, and sinful, and unworthy to lift up our eyes to heaven: it must be persevering, for men ought always to pray, and not to faint: it must be particular, for generalities mean little or nothing: it must be universal, entering into every thing, all the concerns of life, all the means of grace: it must be of all kinds, social, domestic, private, ejaculatory: it must be grateful, abounding in thanksgiving: it must be expectant, waiting and watching for answers: and it must be believing; we must ask in faith.

The most superficial reader of his Bible cannot fail to observe how these two, faith and prayer, are associated in the Word of God. When the blind, the lame, and the diseased, came to Christ for healing, he constantly

reminded them their requests could not be complied with unless they believed. "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" was his question: "Only believe," was his direction. So, in speaking of prayer, "Jesus answered and said unto them, verily I say unto you, if ye have faith and doubt not, ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done. And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer believing, ye shall receive." True, this refers to the work of miracles, but the principle that this state of mind is necessary to prevailing prayer, is as true and as applicable to ordinary matters, as to these displays of Divine power. These two, then, must ever be united in our requests to God. They are born together. When a sinner is brought by grace to believe, he is at the same time brought to pray: the first acting of the new life of grace is believing prayer. They grow together. Belief strengthens prayer: prayer re-acts upon believing, and strengthens it. They die together. The last act of the believer is the last act of prayer; when faith is turned into sight, and prayer ends in uninterrupted eternal praise.

But what is the precise influence of faith in prayer?

Perhaps the best way of entering upon this subject, is to explain the words of the apostle James in reference to this matter: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord." By wisdom in this passage, we are to

understand that of which the same apostle speaks when he says, "The wisdom that is from above, is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy:" that is, Divine grace to enable the tried believers to endure afflictions, and to conduct themselves aright as professing Christians, in the afflictive situations in which they were placed. This they all needed, and for this they were to pray to God, who was ever most ready to give in any measure they needed, without reproving them for their spiritual poverty, or rebuking them for the frequency or fervency of their petitions, as men are apt to do. But then, they were to ask in faith; that is, having a full persuasion that they not only needed this Divine help, but that they could most lawfully ask it as a thing very proper to be carried to God in prayer; that God would be pleased with their asking for it; would hear their prayers, and grant them their petition in reference to that very thing. There was to be no "wavering;" no doubt about their need of the blessing; nor about the propriety of praying for it; nor about the certainty of God's hearing their prayer; nor about their right to expect the blessing. There was to be nothing at all resembling the frame of mind of a man hesitating about going for a favour to a fellow-creature. "Shall I go, or shall I not? Will he hear me and grant me the thing I want, or will he not. Sometimes I think I will go, and then I resolve not to go. At one time I am full of fear, and at another of hope." Now this is "wavering," and there must be nothing like it in the state of a believer's heart towards God in respect to prayer. A man in such a frame of heart is like a wave of the sea, driven by the wind now one way,

now another, without stability. Such a man is not authorised to expect an answer to his prayers. He is a double-minded man, or as the word signifies, a two-souled man; with one soul of faith, another of unbelief. In opposition to this, there must be the one-mindedness of faith, a firm persuasion that we are warranted both to ask and to expect the very thing.

The subject may be divided into two parts; in the first, I may speak of it generally, or in reference to prayer at large.

1. I may advert to the rule of prayer. This is to be found in the Word of God, especially in the promises. They are the rule, ground, and warrant of prayer. We may ask for every thing God has promised; for there is nothing which he has not promised, either in a general or specific manner, to bestow. "Remember the word on which thou hast caused thy servant to hope," must be our plea in approaching the throne of grace. These promises, which are the rule of prayer, are of course equally the rule of faith; and if we believe them, we can ask for their fulfilment; but not otherwise. To ask God for a blessing, the promise of which we do not believe, is a mockery. "May I ask for what I want?" is the enquiry of the Christian in a time of necessity. "Is it promised?" he further asks. "It is," replies his faith, "believe in God's Word." "Then I will carry the matter to God," he continues, "and ask with an expectation that I shall receive it."

2. But we are not only to believe in God as the object of prayer, but in Christ as the medium. He is the way, and the only way, to the Father. "Seeing then that we have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast

our profession," and "come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." "Having a High Priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith." This also is the meaning of that sublime and beautiful symbol in the opening of the eighth chapter of the Apocalypse, where the angel is seen standing at the altar with his golden censer, and much incense wherewith to offer the prayers of all saints. That august personage is the Angel of the Covenant, our Lord Jesus Christ; who by his intercession, of which the incense was the emblem, secures the acceptance of the prayers of his believing people. Prayer is acceptable only as offered in his name: and it is the office of faith to realise this. The Christian while he opens his mouth in supplication and pours out his petitions, keeps his mind steadily fixed on the Mediator of the New Covenant. He wishes for nothing, asks for nothing, expects nothing, but for Christ's sake: he desires that he should have the glory of presenting his prayers to God, and obtaining his blessings from God. The prayers sent up by assembled multitudes, with the most gorgeous rites, if not offered through the mediation of Christ, would be shut out of heaven; while those of a poor peasant from his hut, or of a little child from his bed side, would gain a ready entrance, through Him.

3. But Christian belief leaves not out the work of the Holy Spirit in prayer: for what says the Scripture, "The Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the

hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God." So also Jude says, "Praying in the Holy Ghost." The Spirit has much to do with acceptable prayer, and his work in prayer is too much neglected. He enlightens the mind to see its wants, softens the heart to feel them, quickens the desire after suitable supplies; gives clear views of God's power, wisdom, and grace to relieve us, and stirs up that confidence in his truth which excludes all wavering. Prayer is, therefore, a wonderful thing. Every single acceptable prayer is matter of concernment to the whole Trinity.

It is thus the business of prayer is carried on. The Christian believes that there is a God who takes an interest in the affairs of man, else there would be no ground to pray to him at all. "He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." He believes that God regards his people individually, else there would be no ground or encouragement for individual prayer. A mere general providence would be no motive to individual trust and prayer. He believes that God is able to hear and answer the prayers of all who call upon him, according to the declaration of the apostle, "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." This is the pillar and prop of all prayer. "Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory." The believer sees the arm of Omnipotence stretched out, and is fain to lay hold of God's strength by prayer. And while he recognises his omnipotent arm, he no less beholds his omniscient eye. Were not God all knowing, he could not be the object of prayer.

Of what use would it be to pray to one who saw us not? But his infinite intelligence is the ground of our confidence. He looks upon millions with as perfect a comprehension of all their cases, as he has of any one. He searches the heart, as well as beholds the life; and knows our thoughts, as well as hears our words. The groaning that cannot be uttered he interprets, and hears the silent petition that is ejaculated from the praying heart. Whether the prayer be presented in the solitude of the vast desert, or amidst the haunts of the crowded city, his eye is upon the petitioner: and the Christian believes this.

The Christian believes that God has instituted prayer, and is therefore ever ready to hear and answer it. "O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come," is one of the encouraging views of God which are given in his Word. The Christian knows that every part of the Bible testifies to the fact, that God has instituted prayer, that it is one of the most prominent duties of religion, as laid down in the Scriptures, and that therefore he is not only performing his duty in presenting it, but that to neglect it is one of the most striking proofs of rebelling against God. Knowing all this, he is confident in the use of prayer; he steps firmly, and goes boldly, in approaching the throne of grace. He has neither difficulty, diffidence, nor doubt in his mind, in drawing near to God. He feels that it is a part of the glory of God that he is the hearer of prayer, and he says to himself, "Has he not these thousands of years been hearing and answering the addresses of his people; and can I doubt whether he will receive mine?"

The Christian believes that God will hear and answer his prayers. There is no true faith at all which is not

personal, individual, appropriating. We are to believe, not only that Christ died for sinners, but that he died for us. We are to apply the general fact to our own particular cases. Without this there can not be genuine belief: which stops not in generals, but descends to particulars. He who does not believe that Christ died for him, cannot believe that Christ died for all, for he himself is one of the all. So in the after exercises of true belief, and especially in the case before us, it is a part of faith in prayer, to be assured God will hear us: that there is nothing in our case, which, provided we perform the conditions of prevailing prayer, will shut us out from the presence, the throne, the ear, and the hand of God. It is one of the exercises of this confidence to say, "Sinful though I be, mean and unworthy of Divine notice, yet I am warranted to approach with my prayer to God, as truly as the most distinguished of all the servants of God. 'Remember me, O Lord, with the favour that thou bearest to thy people; O visit me with thy salvation; that I may see the good of thy chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation, that I may glory with thine inheritance.'"

Before I quit this part of the subject, it is of importance to remark, that much of true faith in prayer lies in expecting the answer of our requests. Perhaps there is no part of our duty in which we are more deficient than in this. If we are warranted to ask for any thing, we surely are authorised to expect it. I shall point out the limitations of this, when I come to speak of prayer for a specific object. At present I dwell upon it generally. If prayer mean any thing, it involves that we shall be heard, and answered; and not to look for

an answer is to turn the petition into a mockery of God. "There is no surer mark of trifling in prayer, than when men are careless what they get by prayer." There are three classes of persons who are deficient in this duty of expectation. First, those whose supplications are mere forms, or so vague and general as to have little or no meaning. How many are there, who, if when they rise from their knees, they were to ask themselves the question, "What have I been asking of God?" would not be able to reply. No answer could be expected, for no petition was really presented. Secondly, those who have really asked for some specific object, but go away and forget their own requests. Thirdly, those who do not forget, and are not careless, but are doubtful, unbelieving, distrustful. If they do not believe they shall have an answer, why do they ask? David said, "In the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up." Let us do likewise, and do with our prayers, as merchants do who send their ships to sea, and who look for their return laden with a precious and profitable cargo. Such, then, is the office of faith in prayer, viewed generally.

II. I will now consider it in a specific reference to some particular object, some blessing which we are anxious to obtain, and for which we feel warranted to ask.

I am now supposing the case of a believer who is oppressed with a sense of some great want, which he is impelled to make the matter of earnest prayer, and it may be asked if faith in this case means a persuasion that he shall receive the very thing that he prays for, whether it be for a temporal blessing or a spiritual one? In other words, are we to understand that declaration

literally, and without limitation or exception, "All things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer believing, ye shall receive." In reference to that particular declaration, I would remark that it refers, as the context proves, to miracles, and meant that those to whom this gift was imparted would, if they felt prompted to work a miracle, and had faith to believe they should do it, have power in every instance given them to perform it, in answer to believing prayer. The passage so explained does not therefore apply in its literal meaning to the ordinary experiences of the Christian life. But I will here refer to a remark made in a previous part of this chapter, which must be ever borne in mind, the rule of faith is the rule of prayer; and as this, in every case, is the belief of something that God has said, and in the case of a blessing, something he has promised, so in prayer it cannot be exercised in reference to any particular blessing so as to assure us it shall be given, unless that very blessing is actually promised. Some things are promised generally, and our belief of them must have the same general form; while others are promised specifically, and they must be looked for specifically. Faith does not mean an impression however strong, of any thing upon our mind, but a belief of something that God has said. I may now go on to take up the question of faith in prayer for particular blessings.

1. I will view it in reference to spiritual blessings. These, be it observed, are promised specifically, that is to say, they, the very blessings themselves, are promised to every one who seeks them aright. Suppose the case of a penitent praying for the pardon of his sins, he is to ask for that blessing with a full confidence it will be

given him. He has no need to qualify and guard his petition with such conditions as, "If it be good for him to receive it, and for God's glory to impart it;" for it is good for him, and for God's glory. God has promised that very blessing. He has again and again repeated the promise, and there ought to be neither doubt nor hesitation about the ability or willingness of God to bestow it. The petitioner is to have confidence in God for that blessing, and faith in prayer is in this case an assurance that it will be bestowed. So also, of praying for the Holy Spirit to sanctify, to comfort, to strengthen for all the duties of the Christian life. This blessing is promised to every one who seeks it, and the believer seeking Divine influence by prayer should expect it: his confidence in reference to this matter means his casting out all doubts and fears, and his looking for this very thing. So likewise of prayer for Divine help against any temptation, however strong, God has engaged to assist us, and we should pray for aid with a persuasion we shall have it. In cases of perplexity as to the path of duty, if there be a sincere desire to do the will of God, apart from all personal, selfish, and sinful considerations, we may be assured we shall be guided aright. When greatly afflicted, we should pray for Divine support and consolation, being assured that if really willing to be comforted and sustained, we shall have the very blessing. To pray and not to expect to be answered, in all such cases as these, is to pray in unbelief. And this is really a very sinful state of mind, and exceedingly displeasing to God. When by promise and by covenant he has engaged to bestow upon us such blessings, when he has given up his Son to die upon the cross to bestow them upon us, it must be a great trans-

gression against his truth, his power, and his love, to question whether if we pray for them we shall receive them.

2. But in regard to temporal blessings, faith in prayer must be a somewhat different exercise. By temporal blessings are meant health, prosperity in business, our own life, and the life of our friends, deliverance out of any particular exigency, preservation from danger in travelling, and a variety of other things. All these it is quite clear, may be made matter of prayer. The apostle's language is very explicit, striking, and encouraging, "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." The antithesis between the "being careful for nothing," and the "every thing by prayer" is most impressive, teaching that we are not to allow the greatest thing to make us careful, and that we are to carry the least to God by prayer. O that we knew, valued, and improved this blessed privilege! But what is faith in reference to these things? Certainly not a persuasion we shall have the very thing, without any condition. For where has God promised that when we are in sickness we shall certainly recover? Or that every lawful scheme of industry shall succeed? Or that our friend for whose life we pray shall recover? Or that in travelling we shall never meet with an accident? We have not the promise we shall have these very blessings, and therefore we can have no certain belief that they will certainly come, even in answer to prayer. But is there then no room for any faith in such prayers, and in reference to such things? Unquestionably there is. We are to believe that God authorises us to pray for such

matters, that he will hear the prayers we present, and not drive us in our troubles from his presence, saying, "Bring not such matters here;" that he will accept the very act of presenting our supplications unto him with favour, as an act of homage to himself; that he will in some way answer our prayers, if not in the letter, yet in the spirit; if not by giving us the thing we ask, by bestowing upon us something better. God takes his own time and manner, in answering our prayers; and as regards temporal favours, he has laid down two conditions, that they shall be for our spiritual good, and that they shall be for his glory. Here is room, ample and delightful room, for faith in prayer, in reference to temporal blessings, without supposing we shall have in every case the very things we ask for; and for a firm, tranquillizing, and joyful assurance, that God will hear our prayers, and give the very blessing we ask, if it be for our good and for his own glory, with a belief that it will not be given, yea, a wish that it may not, unless on these conditions. Who could desire it to be otherwise? Who would ask to be left at the mercy of his own prayers? Who would not be afraid to pray for any temporal blessings at all, if God took off these checks to our petitions, these guards of our welfare? We are enjoined by the apostle James, in reference to temporal blessings, to believe that God does so conduct himself; that he acts upon the principle of granting only what he sees best and fittest to be given. This is confidence in his wisdom, love, faithfulness, and power, all at once. It is a noble exercise of trust to carry the dearest object of our affection to him, and laying it down before his throne to say, "Lord, grant me this, if it be thy will, and if not, I

entirely confide in thy glorious perfections that it will be right to deny it me."

3. But there is another class of prayers, I mean such as relate to spiritual blessings for others. Christian parents are anxious, or should be deeply so, for the salvation of their children; and as one way of expressing their solicitude, they pray for them: ought they in such prayers to believe that every one of them will be really converted to God? Before I come to that point, let me enquire whether we have any rule for our expectation in such a case? Now we have, undoubtedly, these declarations: "I will be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee:" "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it:" "I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring, and they shall spring up among the grass, as willows by the water courses:" "Thou shalt be saved and thy house:" "Ye fathers provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." And though these declarations are certainly somewhat vague and general, yet they encourage a hope of saving results: so far as to warrant an expectation of the conversion of such children to God; and the prayer for their conversion ought to be presented in something of a pleasing belief that God will hear our prayers, and grant his blessing upon our efforts. But then consider what these prayers for their conversion imply. They must proceed from a heart that really desires and longs for their conversion. It must not be a mere article in the domestic creed and economy, that the children of the godly should themselves become godly; but it must be an intense yearning, a longing in some

measure proportioned to the object itself. Their conversion must be the first object of our desire concerning them, and all others must be subordinated to it. This object must be sought by all the appropriate means of religious training. Every thing must be done that would conduce to their conversion to God, and every thing kept away from them that would hinder it. There must not only be instruction, but in the fullest sense of the term, education. The character must be formed; and in order to this, the parent must present a model of exemplary piety in himself. And with these conditions, the father may go and pray for his children's conversion, and expect it. Prayers so presented and so followed up, will very generally be answered. It is, no doubt, a fact that very many do pray and yet see comparatively little result from their prayers; their children do not become godly. Why is this? I would by no means suggest that it is in all cases to be traced up to parental neglect. I would not pour vinegar upon the wounds of many a lacerated heart, bleeding under the misconduct of a prodigal son, by asserting that his parent's sins have led to this; but at the same time, there can be little doubt of the general principle, that religious training, carried on from the dawn of reason, through childhood and youth, with judgment uniformity consistency and affection, enforced by an eminently holy and consistent example, and sanctified by believing prayer, would be followed in most cases by the blessed result of their conversion to God. But to pray with expectation of a favourable result, when none of the conditions of prevailing prayer in such cases have been complied with, is but presumption. It is true, God does sometimes in sovereignty answer prayers where

these conditions have been neglected, or at any rate bestow the blessings thus asked; but he has not bound himself to answer them.

Still, it must be admitted, there are cases, which perplex and puzzle us, of children converted to God, whose parents, if they prayed for them at all, neither took pains to educate them religiously, nor ever expected, indeed scarcely wished, their conversion; while on the other hand, there are young persons who have enjoyed the best religious culture, but have never come under the influence of true religion, and that too while other members of the same family have done so. Such instances go to prove that general faith, giving rise to a lively hope of their conversion, a pleasing expectation of it, is all that we are warranted to indulge, but not that we may go so far as to say, "I am sure that all my children will be ultimately brought to God." Has God in any case promised to any one that all his children shall become truly pious, and saved eternally? Has he, in fact, given an absolute promise concerning any one in particular? True, he has given such general promises as encourage a general expectation; and this is all.

The same remarks will apply to other cases. It is not uncommon for eminently pious persons to have their minds deeply concerned and exercised for some object of affectionate interest, whose conversion is to them a matter of prayerful solicitude; and has been sought either by prayer alone, or by the use of means in connection with it. In that case, how far should faith go in prayer? Are we fully authorised to believe that the individual will be converted? To this it may be interrogatively replied, Has God any where promised

the conversion of that person? If so, we may be firmly assured that this blessed result will take place. But since no such promise is granted, all that we can do is to hope for it; and we are in many cases encouraged strongly to hope for it. Hope means the union of desire and expectation, and certainly includes some degree of faith; for what we expect, we must in some measure believe. In like manner must all the labours of the faithful minister be carried on, and indeed all attempts for the conversion of others. There must not only be the use of appropriate means, but also earnest prayer to God; and that prayer must be in faith. We are not, I think, warranted fully to believe that any particular effort will certainly be blessed for the conversion of such and such a person; for is it promised? Such particularity of faith is not warranted, for such particularity of promise is not given. General expectation that God will bless the means in some measure, and to such persons as he thinks fit, is warranted; and strong hopes may be often entertained of the special efficacy of the means in particular and selected cases; but if belief is to be ruled by the promise, and no special promise can be found, no special and certain answer to prayer may be looked for with absolute certainty. Surely, there is ample room even with this limitation, for believing prayer. Churches, in praying for their ministers, ought to pray in faith that they will be blessed; and ministers in praying for themselves, ought to do the same, because we have God's promise, "That as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and return not thither again, but water the earth and make it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my

mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." This, and many other general promises, warrant a very strong general expectation. And in that general faith, both ministers and people are lamentably deficient; a remark which applies with equal truth and force to our efforts for the conversion of the world. We must give ourselves far more to prayer for this great event than we have ever yet done, before it will take place. Money alone will never do it, though we had the revenue of the British empire at command. It is greatly to be feared that our dependence is yet far more upon money, than upon prayer. We seem to calculate our success by our means. Our funds are the atmosphere which raise or depress the quicksilver of our hopes: and, as God works by means, this, to a certain extent, is natural: but we carry it to excess: it would seem as if money were every thing, and prayer nothing. We shall never convert the world as we are: the church is not in a state for such an enterprise: it is not strong enough in faith and prayer for such a work. Believing prayer is wanted, the God-exalting and honouring spirit of wrestling faith. Our churches must be full of prayers, and our prayers full of faith. But then, even here, we have none but general promises, and cannot have any thing but general faith. We know not which mission, or which missionary shall prosper, this or that, or whether all shall alike fail.

I have heard a great deal said about the conversion of sinners at home and abroad, which appeared to me not warranted either by reason, revelation, or experience. To enquiries why no more good has been done, two

opposite causes have been assigned by two different classes of respondents. Some have resolved it all into the Divine sovereignty, and others all into neglect of the appointed means. Both are wrong, by ascribing it all to one cause. There is no question that contrary to the one opinion, the deficiency of result, in great part, arises from the deficiency of appropriate means, and not all from the sovereignty of God. It is not that God is wanting to his promise, but that man is wanting in his duty. On the other hand, it must be admitted that the most appropriate means are not always successful. Was there any thing wanting in the personal ministry of Christ, and yet was not he for the most part unsuccessful? Had not the apostles often to complain of a want of success, and were they deficient in the use of proper means? And how is it that precisely the same means are followed with such different results, in the case of different persons? Something then must be set down to the sovereignty of God, not in the way of excusing man's neglect, but in the way of accounting for the various measures of success in the use of means. The whole subject resolves itself into the nature of the connexion between moral means and their results, which of course is quite different from that subsisting between physical cause and effects: in the latter case it is fixed and invariable; in the former, it is contingent both upon man's will and God's.

An important and interesting question will here arise: "Whether a strong impression upon the mind, to ask for a particular blessing which is not specially promised, is a sufficient ground and warrant for faith to expect it with certainty, as an answer to prayer." Dr. Manton, in his Commentary on James, when

writing on the passage I have quoted and explained, remarks, "Some that have more near communion with God may have a particular faith of some particular occurrences. By some special instincts in prayer from the Spirit of God, they have gone away, and said with David, In this will I be confident. I do not say it is usual, but sometimes it may be so. We cannot abridge the Spirit of his liberty of revealing himself to his people. But remember, Privileges do not make rules. These are acts of God's prerogative, not according to his standing law and rule. However, this I conceive is common, that in a particular case we may conceive the more hope, when our hearts have been drawing out to God by an actual trust: that is when we have urged a particular promise to God in prayer, with submission yet with hope: for God seldom faileth a trusting soul. They may lay hold on God by virtue of a double claim, partly by virtue of the single promise that first invited them to God, and then by virtue of another promise made to their trust, as 'Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, who putteth his trust in thee: because he trusteth in thee.'" This is cautiously worded: and much caution is necessary. To say that God never so lays a subject upon the heart of his people, and so stirs up their desires and prayers after it, as to be an intimation of his mind to grant it, of his will that they should certainly expect it, would perhaps be saying more than we have authority for doing. But when we consider how liable such a supposed intimation of the Divine will is to be abused, and how much it has been abused, to give rise to the wildest, most extravagant and mischievous enthusiasm, mysticism, and fanaticism, we should be very cautious how we admit, even in the

most general and occasional form, the principle that impressions on our minds are special revelations from God, and intended to be rules of our conduct or grounds of our expectation. The safest rule of action and expectation is to abide closely by God's written Word, and where we have only general promises, to be satisfied with general faith: to ask for such things only as God has promised to give: in regard to spiritual blessings, to look for the very blessings themselves: and in regard to temporal ones, to qualify and regulate every petition with profound submission to the will of God, believing that he hears every prayer we present, and will answer it at such time, and in such manner, as shall be most for his glory and our good.

It will be both instructive and encouraging to exhibit a few examples out of many that may be selected from the Word of God, of faith in prayer. And where shall we begin but with him, who is our great Exemplar, and who in this, as well as in other things, has left us an example that we should follow his steps. Our Lord Jesus Christ is said to be "the author and finisher of faith." In his human nature, he was both a man of faith and a man of prayer, and was the highest of all instances of believing prayer. "Ask of me," said the Eternal Father to the Son, in the covenant transactions of redeeming mercy, "and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." He did ask, and in all the full assurance of faith. What promises were made to Him in his covenant relations and work as Mediator. How beautiful the language of the ancient prophet. Do we desire a specimen of His prayer, we find this, and it is but a specimen, but how glorious an one!

"These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee." That wondrous prayer is full of faith, and one of the uses we should make of it is, to see how Jesus prayed, and how he believed. And as to his confidence in God, his whole life was full of it, as it was also of the most sublime devotion. Let his followers learn of him in this respect, as well as in others. But, perhaps, examples less august and lofty will also instruct us. Turn then, first of all, to the prayer of Moses for Israel, when, for the sins of the people in worshipping the gods of Egypt in the wilderness, God said to him, "Let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and consume them, and I will make of thee a great nation." What an appeal to his ambition, if he had any, to become the head and stock of a new great nation! Yet it had no charm for him, when as he thought, the glory of his God was involved and likely to be obscured, and he "besought the Lord his God, and said, Lord, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power, and with a mighty hand? Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou swearest by thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it for ever." O, the boldness, the

holy familiarity, the disinterestedness, the pure zeal for God's glory, contained in this wondrous prayer; and then the faith it displayed! How he took his stand upon the covenant; and held up the promise; and laid hold of the uplifted arm of God; and by his faith, threw round it the silken cord and golden chain, and held it fast in these bonds, so that it could not fall in consuming anger upon the people!

And Daniel also, that man of deep devotion, when he knew by the records of prophecy that the seventy years of the captivity were expiring, how he set his face unto the Lord God to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting and sackcloth and ashes, for the restoration of Jerusalem, and the deliverance of the people! His belief in the certainty of the event, instead of releasing him from prayer, set him upon it, and he thus pleaded in faith. And previously to this, when that cruel plot was formed against his life, when he "knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a-day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime." This was the prayer of faith, and one of the most beautiful instances of it. He prayed for grace to be faithful in that hour of trial, and he confided in his God either to deliver him out of the mouths of the lions, or to sustain him to endure a martyrdom so dreadful. And what a reward was his!

The page of the New Testament is adorned with instances of this confidence in prayer. Behold the Syrophenician woman appealing to Incarnate Mercy for her possessed daughter; beseeching for a cure from him who only could effect it, and whom she believed

could, if he would. What a plea! "Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David, my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil." Such an appeal of course will be instantly heard and granted. No. "He answered her not a word." What, the ear of pity deaf to such a petition? "What," one should have imagined she would say, "is this the mercy, the fame of which has reached even my afflicted home? Will he not hear me, look on me, answer me; must I return, and tell all who come to inquire about my success, that he would not bestow a word or even a look upon me?" To increase her distress and discouragement, the disciples came to Christ and besought him, saying, "Send her away, for she troubleth us." Is this all the mercy that could be found in the hearts of all the twelve apostles? Poor woman I pity you. There is very little hope for you. Jesus at length breaks silence, and says, "I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." His words are more distressing than his silence; that might have arisen from his not hearing them, or from his meditating what answer to return to them: but these seem to put her beyond the pale of hope. Still her faith holds on, and her prayer continues, for "she came and worshipped him, saying, Lord help me." To this he makes a reply that seems to add insult to neglect. "It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs." Mysterious answer! O Saviour, how apparently unlike thyself! What must have been the poor widow's reflections. "My heart is now almost broken, am I not a woman? and must I be called a dog? Is it thus he will belie his own character, and break the bruised reed? Must I go home and look upon my poor child with the sting

of this insult and its venom rankling in my tortured bosom?" Surely she will now give up her suit, stop her plea, and abjure her faith! Yes, she would have done so had her faith been less strong. "Truth, Lord, but the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table." Marvellous reply, one of the finest turns which language ever formed, and the most ingenious deductions ever drawn. Jesus could hold out no longer. He could protract the trial no farther. Like Joseph under the influence of his feelings when his heart was moved by the discourse of his brothers, he drops the innocent disguise which his bursting compassion could not sustain another moment, and with delighted surprise he exclaims, "O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt." What was the meaning of all this? What was the secret of Christ's seemingly inexplicable conduct? What? He saw he had a subject which would enable him to exhibit to the world an extraordinary instance of faith in prayer, and he determined to draw it forth in all its power and beauty. His heart was moved towards her from the beginning. He knew what he would do: and though he beat her off with one hand, he held her fast by the other. Here we have an instance of prayer continued through the power of faith, under delays, apparent neglect, and repulse. The woman still believed that there was mercy in that heart to which she for a long time appealed in vain, and that she should ultimately succeed, and she did.

Then is our belief in God's faithfulness most tried and most triumphant when we still maintain it amidst hope delayed which makes the heart sick. God often sees fit to postpone for a season his compliance with

our requests. Though his ears are always open to our cries, it seems sometimes as if they were fast closed against them; or as if he had covered his throne with a cloud, through which our prayer could not pierce. A minister praying for the success of his labours may be heard in mercy, though it do not happen so soon, or though he cannot see it so clearly, as he may naturally desire. A parent may pray for the salvation of his children, and his desires may have gone up with acceptance before the throne, although the accomplishment may be yet far distant, and they seem for the time to increase in ungodliness. An afflicted person may have actually obtained the sanctified improvement of his tribulation, although he cannot yet perceive the ends of Divine Providence in it; and the happy discovery of them may be a feast reserved, a cordial in store, for him at some future season. In general a mercy may be granted in the way most advantageous to us, though it be suspended for a time. The fruits of God's love, which the hands of his unwise and clamorous children would pluck in a state of immaturity, must hang to ripen in the warm beams of the Sun of Righteousness, and to be filled out by the rain and the dews of heaven. In this interval, however, the Christian's eyes will be ready to fail with looking long; and he may be in danger of losing his faith and stopping his prayers. Therefore our Lord spoke a parable on purpose to teach men always to pray and not to faint.

Another lesson taught us by the faith, perseverance, and success of the Syrophenician woman is, to continue believing prayer under providential occurrences bearing a frowning and discouraging aspect. The Christian may be sure he is warranted to carry a matter to God

in prayer; he may have every reason to believe it is in entire accordance with the will of God; he may have all possible grounds to expect an answer to his prayer; yet all the while God's providence may wear a strange and perplexing aspect. Events may conspire to discourage him. Not only does God delay to answer, but he seems to give nothing but rebuffs. Sometimes like Job, the Christian is compelled to say, "He hath fenced up my way that I cannot pass; and he hath set darkness in my paths." At other times he echoes the plaint of Jacob, "All these things are against me." He seems further and further from obtaining his object: and if he hearkened to reason, or judged by sense, he would abandon the suit. But no, he says, "I am right; I have God's clear promise. I will hold on by faith, and not cease to pray. He is a God that hides himself. Clouds and darkness are round about him; but within those clouds, and wrapt in that darkness, is the object I am seeking; and by and by it will come out of the cloud in all its brightness in answer to believing prayer. I will take hold of his covenant and wait his time."

How much reproof does this subject administer to all God's children, for their neglect of prayer itself; that blessed privilege, which gives such honour to God, and brings such comfort to man. Especially does it reprove us for the weakness of our faith in prayer. How many pray as if they never expected their prayers to be answered. Prayer is little else to them than a duty to be performed, and when it is ended it is done with. They act in prayer, pretty much like those men who carry about bills, knocking at every door and leaving them under the knocker, but never expecting an answer,

and never waiting for one. They knock and go on. But is this prayer? Nothing like it. "I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me," said the prophet. He had sent up his prayer, and he was now observing and waiting to see what would come of it; whether the blessing would come, and whence it would come. It is our shame to think so little of prayer, to have such low, dark, desponding thoughts concerning it. And why have we them? Because our faith is weak. Therefore let us pray: "Lord increase our faith." It is but a little while longer that we shall have need of either faith or prayer; and they are the exercises, the invariable exercises of grace; the ebullitions of that well of water which has been opened in the soul by the gift of Christ in the Holy Spirit, and is ever springing up to everlasting life.

CHAPTER VIII.

FAITH EXERCISED IN HEARING THE WORD.

It has been said in reference to legislation, that there are many good laws, but that there wants one more to secure obedience to all the rest. So may it be said of sermons, many good ones are delivered, but there yet needs another to make men put in practice all the rest. This is the design of the present chapter. And there is a single word, which if attended to, will accomplish this. "The word preached," said the apostle, in reference to the Israelites, "did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it." This lets us into the entire secret of profitable sermons on the one hand, and useless ones on the other, believing or not believing makes all the difference. The Israelites had the glad tidings of Canaan declared to them in the wilderness; even as we have the glad tidings of the heavenly rest; but they did not believe them, and the promise did nothing for them but aggravate their guilt and condemnation. It is faith alone that can make the promise to us of any avail; so said the apostle in another place, "For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in

truth, the Word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe." If there be no believing, there can be no effectual working, and where there is believing, there will be working. So that if there be no working we know the cause.

Throughout every department of his operations God works by instruments or second causes. In the sphere of grace he works by the two instruments of reading and hearing his Word; or rather by this one instrument applied in a twofold manner: and each method is rendered effectual in the same way, that is, by faith, which comes in many cases by reading, but in far more by hearing. In no age of the church does it appear that one of these instruments has superseded the other. Neither is either to be dispensed with; they assist each other: with more attentive hearing, we should have better reading, and with more diligent reading, better hearing. If you have hearing without reading, you lay the church open to all the corruptions of Popery; you have priests, but no Bibles. If you have reading without hearing, you lay the church open to enthusiasm and fanaticism; you have Bibles, but not the ministry which the Lord has appointed.

Whoever reflects upon the matter will perceive that it was the same benevolent wisdom in which the entire scheme of our salvation originated, that made preaching the chief means of converting and sanctifying men. Let education advance as it may, the pulpit will still remain the chief prop of religion in our world, however the press may aid it. And yet even this, with al its power derived from its Divine appointment and admirable adaptation to our mental conformation, is not so efficient as might be expected. When we

consider what the gospel is, the glad tidings and offer of eternal life to the perishing children of men, the adaptation of the living voice to instruct and impress, the Divine command to proclaim these glad tidings, the millions of sermons which are continually being preached, and the occasional exhibitions of its power, such as the conversions on the day of Pentecost, and under the preaching of Whitfield and Wesley, we are astonished that a greater result does not habitually follow the use of such an instrumentality. What countless millions of sermons seem to be preached in vain, so far as regards any appreciable, or at any rate, ascertained result! Let an individual Christian, especially one far advanced in life, sum up if he can, the thousands of discourses he has heard on all the various topics of Divine truth, and then enquire what he ought to have been as to knowledge, faith, holiness, deadness to the world, and meetness for heaven and eternity. What a sad, and melancholy, and humbling disproportion between the means and the products, will he discover in himself! To what a small extent has he profited by them all! No doubt he has had much mental gratification; much imaginative and even religious pleasure, in hearing all these discourses; and no small degree of edification. It may also be lawful to take into account what, but for these sermons, he might have been in the way of spiritual deterioration. Still I say, what a small amount of profit in the way of increased acquaintance with his Bible, and increased Christian holiness in all its visible branches, can he persuade himself he has gained! Let it never be forgotten that real, actual profiting, the enstamping of the Bible deeply upon the heart and visibly upon

the character, the transformation of the whole heart and soul into the image of God and the mind of Christ, the cultivation of a heavenly temper, and a meetness for glory everlasting, with real Christian consolation during our pilgrimage to the skies, are the ends of preaching; and that provided these are not promoted by it, whatever it may do in the way of gratification of taste, or excitement of pleasurable emotion, the true end of preaching is not gained by it. That and that only, is profiting. Multitudes are pleased, who are not in the smallest degree profited: and sometimes those are least profited who are most pleased: while on the other hand, many a hearer, little disposed at the time to be gratified by what he heard, has, like the patient who suffered almost with anger the sharp pangs inflicted by the surgeon's knife or probe, lived to bless the man who put him to pain, instead of merely lulling his pain with opiates. If it be true, that profiting is the end of preaching, to what an extent does preaching perpetually fail to accomplished its end. How is this? To whom shall we impute the blame?

This is partly to be ascribed to the preachers of the gospel. Either their aim is often something else than profiting their hearers, or else they know not how to accomplish this. It is impossible to hear a great deal of even what is called the evangelical preaching of this age, without asking the question, "Who can be profited by this? What adaptation is there in all this to convert sinners; to instruct, sanctify, and comfort believers? It is all very fine: there is much to please the intellect, to gratify the taste, to exercise the imagination; but what bearing is there in it upon spiritual edification, in any view of it?" I do not forget that many persons,

and many preachers also, take a far too limited view of the range of pulpit instruction, and would exclude from sermons subjects which I think might and should be introduced to them. And I am equally convinced that instruction is by many thought too little of as one way of profiting. A discourse replete with clear scriptural exposition, but addressed principally to the understanding, would, by some persons, be thought cold, uninteresting, and unprofitable, if it did not contain what is called experience, and was not made up in great part of fervid appeals to the feelings. With such persons, profiting means nothing more than emotional excitement.

Still it is my sad and serious belief that if the evangelical pulpit is losing its power, it is because it is losing sight of its object and its aim. The cultivation of the intellect and the advancement of knowledge, in the present day, are lifting both preachers and hearers above the plain and simple gospel of Christ. By many persons sermons are heard no longer as the word of God, but as the word of man; not as means of grace and aids to salvation, but as intellectual exercises on religious topics, for the gratification of taste, intellect, and imagination on a Sunday. And it must be confessed that the preachers of them are, by their artificial and excessive elaboration, and the introduction of new topics, teaching their hearers so to regard them, and thus training them to be a kind of amateur hearers of sermons. A philosophized Christianity instead of a christianized philosophy, is finding its way into our pulpits; which, aided by a rationalistic taste, and set off by an aspiring intellectuality, is seducing the church from the simplicity that is in Christ Jesus. And to what shall

we attribute all this, but to the increasing weakness of faith? The faith of many a preacher is fluttering at this moment in the spell of the basilisk eye which is fixed upon it: or if it be not so far under the spell, is whirling in dangerous circles and partial admiration round it. The faith of the pulpit is become somewhat enervated. You do not always see the preacher rising clothed in all the awful majesty of eternal truth; nor hear him wielding "the powers of the world to come," as if his eye at that moment were piercing the veil and gazing upon the Shekinah on the mercy seat; nor feel him commending himself to your conscience as in the sight of God. His is not the power to encircle your imagination with the realities of the unseen world; to unveil to you the glories of heaven, the terrors of hell; and to make you feel as if the day of judgment had come, and you stood face to face before the Judge on the great white throne. No: it is often power; but of another kind, and for another end. It is the power of intellectuality, of taste, of logic, of poetry, of philosophy; the power to please, but not to profit. You say, as you witness the exhibitions of intellect, "Here is the reason, but where is the faith, of the preacher?"

But this chapter has chiefly to do with the faith of the hearer, or rather his want of it. Without faith it is impossible to hear even the gospel itself with profit. No matter how grand, glorious, and to ourselves interesting and important the theme; no matter how certain and momentous may be the consequences of receiving or rejecting it, no matter how anxiously or how pressingly it may be urged upon us, it can do us no good if it be not believed. It may be to us, as it is, a message of life and salvation, but till faith opens the

door of the mind and heart to let it into the soul, it is a blessing at the gate but not in the house.

My object, therefore, now will be to inquire in what way faith is to be so exercised in relation to the preaching of the Word of God as to secure a profitable hearing.

First, I shall consider the exercise of belief before hearing sermons.

It need scarcely be said that the whole course of our hearing to be profitable must rest upon the basis of an habitual faith in the Scriptures as the Word of God, and in Christ as the substance of Divine revelation. No man can attend the ministry of the Word in faith, who is not a believer of the Word itself. And this thought must be habitually in our mind in prospect of going to the house of God. Suppose you were going to court, to be honoured with an audience by her Majesty, and to receive a communication or direction from her; and suppose, that instead of expecting it to be delivered to you by her own lips, you knew she would speak by one of her ministers, who would also be empowered to expound as well as to read it. Still the prevailing thought of your mind, in prospect of going into the royal presence would be, "I am going to receive a message from the Queen. I must be profoundly attentive to all I hear, that I may understand every word of the royal mandate, and be prepared to execute the monarch's will." You would not consider the intervention of a third person, so far, as to put aside this view of your visit to court. Your expectations would not settle on the reader of the Queen's address to you; it would not be the eloquence of his exposition of it, the melody of his voice, the fascination of his

manner, that would fill and occupy your mind beforehand; but the presence and commands of majesty, and the right manner of conducting yourself as regards the royal message. What else or what less is before you in going to hear a sermon? It is a message from God to you. It is God speaking by his minister. And shall your mind be occupied wholly by the one thought, as it too frequently is, of your being about to hear some popular preacher? Faith lifts the soul above this low expectation, and fills it with the solemn thought, "I am going to hear what God the Lord will say unto me." In proportion as we realize this, we shall collect our thoughts, elevate our ideas, and compose our minds; just as we should properly dress, adjust, and adorn our persons, and prepare our manner, for our appearance at court.

Further, if we have faith, we shall consider preaching not as a human, but a divine, institute. We shall recognize in it not only a wisely adapted but humanly invented means of improvement, but an ordinance of God, which derives its efficacy in part from his own appointment: we shall consider it as the way in which he walks, and is wont to reveal himself to his people. "Thou meetest him that worketh righteousness, those that remember thee in thy ways." Hence it will enlarge our expectations in prospect of going up to the house of God. We shall look for him there, and cherish an assurance that we are going to be blessed by the word which he will speak to us. Without a particle of enthusiasm, we shall, for we may, suppose, that the preacher will say something that will suit our case. Our anticipations will rise to something higher than even "the feast of reason and the flow of soul." To

the heart hungering and thirsting after righteousness, something else will attract it to the pulpit, than mere intellectuality, logic, or rhetoric, even the provisions of God's house, the truths of the gospel, the bread of life. The expectations thus raised and supported by faith, God will not disappoint; but will bless the provisions of his house, and satisfy the poor with bread. He will reveal himself in and by the sermon, to those who come to see his power and glory in the sanctuary. He loves to realize those expectations which centre in himself, instead of the preacher; and to satisfy those longings which are directed to the enjoyment of his favour. How different is all this to the practice of those who go to worship merely to see and be seen; or because their fathers went and they have been taught to go; or to criticise or worship the preacher; or to furnish their heads with knowledge, and not to enrich their hearts with grace; or to calm and appease their conscience; or to save themselves from being called atheists; or to make hearing sermons their religion itself, instead of regarding them as only the means of learning and promoting it; of course there is no faith in any such hearers.

Faith would unquestionably lead us, did we possess it, to pray very earnestly for the Spirit of God to be granted both to ourselves and the preacher. "For who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, as the Lord gave to every man?" There is no blessing upon the Word but comes from God. No sermon will ever convert a sinner, or comfort or sanctify a believer, without God's Spirit. The Word indeed is, in its own nature, quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword; but it is

only in the hand of the Spirit that it does any execution, and pierces through the inmost recesses of the heart. The seed of the kingdom contains a germinating and vegetating principle; but it is only as it is fertilized by the moisture that comes from the clouds that it will grow. The believer recognises this truth, and goes to his closet with the prayer, "Lord, if thy presence go not with us, carry us not up hence." We should in this respect as in others, turn God's promises into prayers, and say, "Bless both the preacher and my soul. Open thou mine eyes by his ministry, to see wondrous things out of thy law: and as thou hast said thou wilt abundantly bless the provisions of thy house, fulfil this day thy word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused him to hope." Prayerless hearers must be profitless hearers. When we see the careless, undevout manner in which people hurry off to sermons, can we wonder that they get no good by them? It would be a wonder if they did. Not a pause in their worldly thoughts, not a single ejaculatory prayer on the way to God's house, or entering into it, not the glance of an eye or a thought to heaven, either of desire or expectation. Alas, alas, what good can come of hearing sermons in this fashion.

Secondly. Faith must be in exercise in hearing sermons, not only before but at the time. It must be mixed with hearing. The hearing and believing must be contemporaneous. As the truths of the discourse enter the ear, faith must, as I have said, open the door to give them cordial welcome. It will lead you to listen to a sermon with solemn attention, deep reverence, devout affections, as to the word of God. As the truth is unfolded by the preacher, you should rise above him

to the God who sends him; yea, you should rise above the truth he speaks to the God who is its author. The gospel itself is infinitely momentous, for it is the word of salvation. On the effects which it produces in us, depends our state for eternity. It is the word of life, the very element in which the Christian is appointed to live and to receive continual accessions of light and purity, until he is presented faultless in the presence of the Divine Glory. But it is still more solemn to recollect it is the Word of God, which is never heard in an appropriate frame, except when the hearer is saying in sincerity and truth, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth."

If there be faith in hearing, all disposition to carp, cavil, and criticise, will be dismissed from the soul, and be considered as much out of place as it would be in a sick man who was listening to directions for saving his life, or a condemned man who was receiving instructions how he might avoid an ignominious death. We should hear the Word of God in the character not of judges, but of those who shall be judged by it. A true belief will not indeed receive error for truth, and feed and flourish as well upon poison as upon bread. It can and will discriminate between the doctrines of men and the revelations of God: for it is its duty no less to reject what is false than to receive what is true. But the believer will unite with this discrimination, candour, docility, and meekness. The soul awed by the presence of God, the importance of salvation, the solemnities of judgment, the prospect of eternity, and the scenes of heaven and hell, which it is the business of the preacher to bring before it, will not have time or disposition to dwell on little imperfec-

tions of the composition, manner, or elocution of the speaker, or to condemn a sermon, useful as a whole, for a word, phrase, or sentiment, not exactly to the taste of the hearer.

Self-application is eminently characteristic of true faith. The believer hears not so much for others as for himself. He does not rightly believe the gospel who does not believe that Christ died for him as well as others; so neither does any man rightly hear the gospel, who does not hear for himself. "What should we think," says Robert Hall, "of a person who, after accepting an invitation to a feast, and taking his place at the table, instead of partaking of the repast, amused himself with speculating on the nature of the provisions, or the manner in which they were prepared, and their adaptation to the temperament of the several guests, without partaking of a single article. Such however, is the conduct of those who hear the Word without applying it to themselves, or considering the aspect it bears on their individual character." Faith detaches every one from the congregation, places him in a state of isolation, and, amidst surrounding multitudes, makes him hear apart. In the exercise of this grace, the believer says, "God speaks to me by the preacher: that doctrine is my lesson, and I must learn it; that command is my duty, I must practise it; that promise is my encouragement, I must live upon it; that warning is for my admonition, I must give heed to it." It lays up every thing in our hearts, either for present or future use.

But it becomes us above all to apply those truths and portions which are specially appropriate to our case; and oftentimes these are so unmistakeable, that we are ready to imagine either that some one had made the

preacher acquainted with our case, or that God had given a special direction to his thoughts with a view to us. In order to this however, we must become intimately acquainted with our own sins, weaknesses, wants, temptations, and dangers. No one can be a profitable hearer who has not much self-knowledge. That which is food for one is poison for another. Believers lose their comfort and unbelievers their souls, because one applies to themselves the threatenings and the other the promises. Therefore, while the hearer's ear is given to the preacher, his eye should be fixed intently upon his own heart, to give a right direction to all that is said.

Faith has not only to do with new truths or even new discoveries of received ones, but with old ones also. It is its business not only to make excursions into unexplored countries, but to traverse those already known: not merely to find out new walks and prospects, but to take new pleasure in frequented paths, and to be ever seeing new beauties in familiar objects. I appeal to the experience of every real Christian, whether the sweetest and most profitable seasons he has enjoyed have not been those in which he is not conscious of learning any new truth strictly speaking, but in which he was indulged with spiritual and transforming views of the plain, unquestionable truths of the gospel. The Word of God is the food for souls, and it corresponds to that character in this respect, among others, that the strength and refreshment it imparts depend not upon its novelty, but upon the nutritious properties it possesses. It is a sickly appetite only which craves incessant variety.

Impartiality is essentially included in the faith of hearing. There is a vast variety of subjects in the

Word of God. It is a garden of many flowers, all beautiful in their season; a feast of many dishes, all pleasant and nutritious; and though one flower may be more admired than another, and one viand more relished than another, yet all should be regarded with approbation and delight. Yet how many there are who have their favourite topics, and can endure no other. Some are all for doctrinal statements, and esteem as cold legality all preceptive preaching; while others are all for duty, and revile as antinomianism the exhibition of the doctrines of grace. Some would have only the mild persuasion of the gospel, while others would have the preacher clothe himself in the terrors of Sinai, and deal in thunder. Some would have the privileges of true believers only dwelt upon, and others want the sins of worldly professors constantly denounced. This is fancy, not faith. "The wisdom that cometh from above is without partiality and without hypocrisy." As it is a symptom of a diseased state of body to be able to relish only one sort of food, it is not less so of the mind to have a taste for only one sort of instruction. Faith, like the bee, sucks honey from every flower, whatever be its form, its colour, or its fragrance.

Thirdly. Faith has something to do after hearing.

It perpetuates the remembrance of what we have heard. We cannot be saved by a forgotten word. And we know and believe the truth in vain if we do not remember it. This we are taught by those awful expressions, "By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain." The apostle James describes, by a most appropriate figure, the faint and transient impressions produced by sermons on those that hear

them, when he compares them to the hasty glances which a person takes of his form, when he passes rapidly before a mirror: "If any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was." He does not stay long enough before the mirror to see what in his person needs to be removed, or in his dress to be adjusted; and therefore soon forgets what he was in appearance, and what he needs to do to render himself becoming. So is it with the hearer of the Word, who has not a true belief of it. He catches from the sermon a hasty and imperfect view of his moral self, but he pays no particular attention to his character, conduct, and requirements, passes from before the moral mirror, and forgets all he heard. Under sermons he is perhaps impressed and convinced; but there is no faith, and the impression is soon effaced. It was emotion, not conviction, that was produced; mere sensibility, not believing choice. Now nothing will keep up the recollection and perpetuate the conviction, but a firm belief of its truth. "Yes," says the man who believes, "it is all true: the solemnities of public worship are over, the voice of the preacher is hushed, the tones and words of impassioned eloquence have ceased; but the awful truth remains: sin and salvation are what they were, and all they were, when so vividly described from the pulpit. I believe: Lord help my unbelief." Such a man "looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein." He stands long before the mirror of the sermon; attentively considers his character and conduct as reflected from it; sees what needs to be altered, supplied or improved, and he carries away an

accurate knowledge and vivid recollection of what he heard. "He being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the Word, this man shall be blessed in his deed."

Faith expostulates with our hearts on what we have heard. It preaches the sermon all over again to ourselves alone. Ah! this is the reason why sermons are preached in vain. As soon as the service is over, instead of breaking up in solemn silence and retiring each one too full, too serious, to engage in idle talk, many by mutual consent begin conversation about the most trivial matters in the house of God, and continue it all the way home; and then, instead of retiring to their closets to pray over in secret what they have heard in the sanctuary, all gather round the fireside in gleeful mood to enjoy themselves, now that the sermon is over. Not so all. Here and there a devout and spiritual mind, full of the subject, steals away to her chamber to muse upon, and pray over, and apply it all. "No," she says, "I cannot forget such truths; they are truths, and I believe them. I have seen and felt them afresh to-day. My conviction of them is strengthened. O God, I thank thee that thy servant was enabled to bring them before me with such light and power. Let them abide in me continually, and influence me in every thing."

Faith disposes those who have it, to converse with others about what they have heard. When we have been informed of some great and important news, which concern others as well as ourselves, we are naturally inclined to talk of them with those who have a joint interest in them. This conversation about the sermon between Christians, however, will refer far more to the theme of the discourse, than to the ability of the preacher.

Strong impressions will in some cases dispose to musing rather than to speaking, as deep rivers flow in silence. The heart, in others, will be too full to repress its emotions; but in either case it will be lifted far above the region of mere admiration, criticism, or taste. The tongue if it speak will echo the awful truths the ear has heard. "Did not our hearts burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the Scriptures?" So said the two disciples who had conversed with the Saviour on the way to Emmaus: and so say the profited, as well as pleased, hearers of a sermon to one another, when it is over. Listen to the discourse of two different groups of hearers on their way home, or after they have reached it. "What an eloquent sermon!" exclaims one person: "And what a beautiful voice!" replies the other: "And how graceful his action!" adds a third. "What genius, what imagery, what splendid diction! What an intellectual treat. He is unquestionably the greatest preacher of the day. Such new ideas, such a philosophical view of his subject." There is not much faith in all this. These hearers would have said the same things after hearing a lecture on any subject of literature, and have had just as much piety too. But now listen to the remarks of another circle. "Well," says a serious and thoughtful individual, "if we are not profited by such clear and full exhibitions of momentous truths, such solemn admonitions, and such faithful warnings, the fault will be our own." "Yes," replies another, "we must be more in earnest in the pursuit of salvation; the great themes of revelation never stood out before me in such reality, nor came upon my heart with such power before." "Nor," says a third, "was I ever so deeply convinced either of the

evil of sin, or the necessity of an atonement, or of the glory of the gospel in meeting the case of the sinner." "I thought till now," adds a fourth, "that I had fully felt the value of a Saviour, but the brightness of his glory has come over me to-day with new splendour." This is faith, not fancy: piety, not mere taste. Better, far better, not speak at all, but go home in silence, than to enter upon all kinds of general and trifling conversation as soon as the service is over. Men soon talk away the good impressions they have received. Convictions are thus stifled in the birth, and good resolutions fall into oblivion. In the olden time it was customary for the saintly father, at the hour of evening prayer, to recapitulate the sermons which the family had all heard, or to call upon them for some account of those discourses. Alas, how has this, and some other exercises of domestic piety, fallen into desuetude in our days! Why do not the heads of families still act thus with their households? How it would benefit themselves by riveting what they had heard upon their own memories, and how it would benefit their servants and children, to go over at home in a familiar manner, the sermon which they had heard in the sanctuary. Parents, how this would tend to impress them with your own convictions of the truth of what you had heard! Alas, alas, how rarely do some families receive from their parents any remarks upon the sermons they have heard, unless in the way of cavil, criticism, or censoriousness! Who can wonder that such children look with contempt upon the preaching thus held up to ridicule, and prefer a novel or a play to sermons they have been thus led to despise.

Faith will immediately and anxiously reduce to practice what it has heard. Nothing in Scripture is

purely speculative. There is no mere science in religion. All revelation, not excepting its sublimest mysteries, is practical, and furnishes motives to the practice of some duty, or the exercise of some grace. The doctrine of faith is designed to produce the obedience of faith. If this be true of the Word of God itself, it is equally true of hearing it. If it be not true, hearing is too much; if it be true, hearing is too little. It is published not only that it may be heard, but practised; and it is only a solemn mockery of God, an awful impertinence, an aggravated insult, to hear sermons with apparent seriousness, yet without an intention to comply with their directions. Will hearing sermons without practising them carry you to heaven? Not any more than a lecture upon medicine will cure your disease; or one upon the elements of food will satisfy your hunger. Here then is the action of faith, it goes straight from hearing the sermon to reduce it to practice. The sermon reveals to us our corruptions, it instantly sets about mortifying them. The sermon makes known a neglected duty, it goes and performs it. The sermon calls for a sacrifice of something dear to us, it instantly makes the surrender. We have all just as much belief during and in the sermon, as we have of obedience to its requirements afterwards, and no more.

It is the part of faith, if we have received any benefit, to ascribe it all to God's grace. It is neither to yourself, nor to the minister, that the honour of your profitable attendance on a service is to be ascribed. There was indeed your own attention, and the preacher's instruction, and they were necessary to your benefit; but it was by God's grace that both were made effectual. Set the crown on the head of your Divine Lord, and

not on that of the minister. Preachers are neither to be under nor over-valued. Honour them, love them, pray for them, be grateful to them; but do not idolize them.

Such is the course which you should follow if you would profit by the means of grace, and which you will follow if you hear with faith. O Christian, consider how much of the power and happiness of the divine life in your soul depends upon hearing sermons. Unhappily, multitudes allow themselves to be too dependent on these means, to the neglect of the private perusal of the Scriptures. It were much to be wished you would be more conversant with the Bible; that you would make it the man of your daily counsel; and secure leisure for studying the Word of God for yourself. You should dig for treasure yourself in that unexhausted, inexhaustible mine of wealth: but as some have not time, others but little ability, and all too little inclination to do so, it is of immense importance you should know how to improve by the sermons which you have opportunity and disposition to hear, and therefore you should take all suitable opportunities for hearing them.

A few words may be subjoined on the subject of the exercise of faith as regards the Lord's Supper. In the observance of this solemn and impressive ordinance, there is ample room for the exercise of all the great principles of true religion. No institute of the gospel has been more misunderstood or more abused than this. It is of infinite consequence that it should be cleared from all the mistakes with which ignorance and superstition have beclouded and corrupted it. I remark then

that the person by whom it is observed should be a genuine believer in our Lord Jesus Christ. Unless this be the case, it cannot be done in faith at all. None but a true believer can enter into its design. All else must "eat and drink judgment to themselves, not discerning the Lord's body." It is not a converting ordinance, but a strengthening and edifying one. To an unconverted man it is poison, not food. The celebration of it in an unregenerated state ministers to delusion, and wraps the soul up in unbelief. There can be no exercise of faith in this ordinance if there be not a principle of genuine belief already in the soul. Let none therefore be urged to observe the Lord's Supper, who have not first committed their souls into the Lord's hands, to be redeemed by his blood, and regenerated by his Spirit.

And not only must the person partaking of the Lord's Supper be a true believer, but his observance of the Supper must be an act of his belief. It must itself be an exercise of faith. It must not be a mere formality and bodily ceremony; but while the senses are conversant with the material elements, the mind must be taken up with the authority, nature, and design of the institute.

It should be observed with an intelligent and deep conviction of its Divine appointment and obligation, "I must needs keep this feast," says the Christian, "because Christ has enjoined it. He, and not man, instituted it. There is nothing of human device in it. I yield to his authority who said, 'Do this in remembrance of me.'" The rite has come down associated with the practice of the church of God in every age; apostles, martyrs, and reformers have observed it: but

it is not on that ground that I continue the custom, but because I have faith in Christ, and not because I yield to ecclesiastical authority. He had a right to set up this ordinance, he did set it up, and I submit to his authority, and obey his commands."

The believer recognises its purely symbolical and commemorative nature. He does not sink into the revolting absurdity and degrading superstition of Romish or semi-Romish notions on this object. It is true the Papist boasts of his greater faith in embracing the profound mystery of transubstantiation. He tells us he exceeds all men in faith, for he believes not only what is above reason, but against it. He discredits the testimony of his very senses, and believes that that which has the taste, smell, and other accidents of bread, is still not bread in its substance. He boasts of the greatness and strength of his faith. This however is neither faith nor reason, but abject credulity, a miserable delusion, an absolute renunciation of the human faculties, which, by pretending to cleave close to the literal import of our Lord's words, perverts their meaning, and makes them preposterously absurd. The intelligent Christian knows that the bread is still bread, the wine still wine, and nothing more: and that they are to be used as symbols of truth, the truth of the body and blood of Christ given for his salvation. He rejects the Lutheran notion of consubstantiation, which means the presence of the real body and blood of Christ with the bread and wine, as well as the Popish figment of transubstantiation. Nor does he entertain any notion of what is called "the mystical presence" of Christ with the elements. He does believe, and it is his glory and felicity to believe, that Christ's presence is with

him in the act of receiving the bread and wine; but he has no notion, and therefore no belief, of that presence in the elements. Whatever is in the bread and wine, he really and bodily eats and drinks, and the idea of eating and drinking the presence of Christ, is to him very revolting. Besides, of what use would it be to him in a spiritual sense? What is eaten and drank goes into the stomach, and by the process of digestion and assimilation into the body, not into the soul.

It is not then the bread and the wine which are the objects of faith, these are objects of sense; nor is it these that do good to the soul of themselves, but the truths they represent. It is only truth that can sanctify; and the elements of the Lord's Supper are no farther beneficial to the recipients of them, than as they are regarded in the light of symbols of truth. There is neither mystery nor obscurity in the Lord's Supper. It is the simplest thing imaginable; and its simplicity is its glory. It is an emblematic representation and commemoration of the sacrifice of Christ's human nature upon the cross for sin. It is an auxiliary to our faith through the medium of our senses; it is a stirring up of our memories to remember Jesus Christ. "Do this in remembrance of me." This is what it means and all it means, so far as Christ is concerned. Men who love the marvellous and mysterious, who desire to make it an instrument of priestly power, who are prone to imagination and superstition, have laboured hard to make it something more, and in the attempt have destroyed its beautiful simplicity, as a representative and commemorating ordinance. Hence they have exhibited it as the mystery of our holy religion; the channel of sacramental grace; the unbloody sacrifice of the mass;

and have so wrapt it in obscurity and surrounded it with superstitious ceremony, that while some have been repelled from it as what is peculiarly awful, others have observed it as the very means of salvation. But what says the intelligent Christian? "I believe in the sole authority of Christ to appoint rites and ceremonies. I believe that he has instituted this as a perpetual memorial to the world of his death; and to quicken my lively remembrance of this great event, in obedience to his command, I observe it for this purpose; and according to his promise, I expect his presence and his grace in the observance." What more can any one want or wish than this? Is not the penitential, believing, loving, joyful, obedient remembrance of Christ the highest state of mind to which a Christian can rise this side of heaven? For people that love the sentimental, the imaginative, the poetic, the mysterious, this will not be enough; but for those who understand the religion of the New Testament to be the influence of truth received through the aid of the Holy Spirit by faith, it is all that is necessary for a life of godliness.

Faith, and not fancy, is the proper state of mind at the time of receiving the Lord's Supper. There is much misconception on this subject in the minds of many good people. Instead of allowing their understanding, during the time of celebration of the Supper, to be conversant with the truth there represented, they are employing their fancy in conceiving of the fact there set forth. What I mean is this, instead of their minds, hearts, and consciences, being refreshed by faith in the death of Christ as a sacrifice for sin, they are all the while endeavouring to picture him personally to their imagination, nailed to the cross, with the blood stream-

ing from his temples, his hands, his feet, and his side; and thus work up their emotions by this scene of suffering. They bow, in fact, before a crucifix, though the crucifix is in their imagination instead of being suspended upon the wall. Everybody is aware of that power of the mind to call up before it an absent scene, person, or object; and this can be done in reference to the crucifixion, as well as any other object. It is not the design of the Lord's Supper to do this, but to establish us in the belief of the truth that "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures," and to keep up our hope of his second coming; and the work of faith at the Lord's table is, to rest with blessed confidence and peace on this sure foundation.

Faith in the Lord's Supper has special reference to Christ as our sacrifice for sin, not to the exclusion of other views of his person and work, but still it pre-eminently relates to this. This implies other views. His humanity only died, or could die upon the cross; but without the Divinity to which that humanity was mysteriously and inseparably united, there could have been no atonement. The atonement, rather than the example of Christ, is the subject of commemoration; yet in making that atonement, Christ exercised the deepest submission to his Father's will, and the most exemplary patience; and it was these dispositions of his mind that united with the agonies of his body to make a propitiation for our sins. So that there can be no separation of one view of Christ's person and work from the other: they are all united and form a glorious whole. Yet they may, like the colours of the rainbow, be viewed separately, though thus combined. It is therefore the death of Jesus; the breaking of his body and the pouring out

of his blood upon the cross, that we are here called upon to commemorate. The Lord's Supper is a standing, glorious and delightful embodiment of the great doctrine of the atonement. It is the exhibition of that fundamental truth in a form most impressive to the senses. It is a visible, material comment upon that passage, "Whom God set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood." How sweetly should the Christian meditate in this ordinance, on sin pardoned and God glorified! There, mercy and truth meet together, righteousness and peace embrace each other.

Nor does faith leave out of consideration any of the collateral objects and designs of the Lord's Supper. It is not only a memorial of Christ's first advent, but a pledge of his second coming. "Ye do thus shew forth the Lord's death till he come." The bridegroom and husband of the church has, for wise and gracious purposes, left his bride and spouse in the wilderness: but he has given her not only a promise, but a pledge of his return to take her to himself. He is gone away into the heavens, but he will come again without a sin offering unto salvation. "Meet," said he to her, "meet often at my table, and think and talk of me, and keep up the expectation of my second coming." This is one part of our business and object, to think of Christ's reappearance. In this exercise of belief, both at the Lord's Supper and at other times, Christians generally are very deficient. We do not think enough of Christ's second coming. What would be said of the wife, who, when her husband was away in another country, could be happy without him, and be contented to think rarely about him? On the contrary, how the loving wife longs in such circumstances for her husband's return. "O

when will he come back," is her frequent exclamation. Spouse of the Lamb, church of the Saviour, where is thy waiting, hoping, longing for the second coming of thy Lord? Is this thy blessed hope, as it was that of the primitive church? O Christian, art thou not wanting here? Every morsel of that bread thou eatest at the sacramental table; every drop of wine thou drinkest, is the voice of Christ saying to thee, "I will come again and receive you to myself," and should draw forth thy longing desires, saying, "Come Lord Jesus: even so, come quickly."

And then it is a joint participation, hence it is called the communion of the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore we are to believe in the Holy Catholic Church. "We being many are one bread, (loaf,) and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread, (loaf.)" There, in that loaf, one though consisting of many parts, is the emblem of the unity of the church. The Lord's Supper exhibits this, and the believer receives it, and rejoices in it. To him it is a matter of inexpressible pleasure to be able to say, "One Lord, one faith, one hope. We are all one in Christ." He breaks through the barriers of sectarianism, and embracing all who partake of like precious faith, and the common salvation, says, "Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity." It is said, faith worketh by love: and never does it work more powerfully in this way than at the Lord's Supper. Who that really believes can indulge malice there? In what truly regenerated heart can wrath dwell there?

If this grace be in exercise at the Lord's Supper, it will produce joy, for it is a feast, and joy becomes a feast; penitential humility, for we are there reminded

that though reconciled, we were once enemies to God by wicked works; love, for every thing says to us, "See how he loved you;" holiness, for it is there declared, "He gave himself for us to redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works;" devotedness, for how forcibly and pathetically are the apostle's words addressed to us there, "Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price, therefore glorify God with your body and your spirit which are his;" hope, for we are there reminded that when He who is our life shall appear, we also shall appear with him in glory; brotherly kindness, for those around us are members of the same body, redeemed by the same blood, objects of the same love, and are to be our friends through eternity; charity, for the propitiation, not only for our sins, but the sins of the whole world, is there represented to us. What grace is there that is not cherished, and what corruption is there that is not mortified, by a believing observance of the Lord's Supper?

Such are the exercises of faith in the Supper of our Lord.

CHAPTER IX.

STRONG FAITH, INCLUDING THE ASSURANCE OF FAITH.

Growth and ultimate maturity of strength are according to the general laws of life, and feebleness and a stationary condition are exceptional cases. This is as true of the spiritual life, as it is of vegetable and animal existence, and indeed is set forth in the metaphors by which Christian vitality is represented in the Word of God. The Christian is compared to various trees and animals, all, of course, importing advancement, growth, increase. Whatever is good tends to what is better, and this tendency is checked only through neglect or opposition. Yet in the Divine life this fact is in many, perhaps I may say in most cases, neglected. Professors are contented, as children, to be always babes; as pupils, to be always in the alphabet of experimental religion. It would seem as if the least degrees of holy excellence satisfy them; as if they had no ambition; no earnest desire to "grow in grace;" no agonising endeavour to be "strengthened with all might in the inner man." What a prayer that is of the apostle for the believing Hebrews, "The God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good

work." Make you perfect; not only in one thing, but in every good work. The Scriptures dwell much, very much, on that word perfection. And so ought we. Our aim should be perfect faith, perfect peace, perfect love, perfect hope. It is not enough to have faith, but our aim ought to be at strong faith, yea, "the full assurance of faith." The love, desire, and pursuit of other things, increase with possession. It is so with money, with knowledge, with fame. The desire after these things is never satisfied. The incessant longing is for more, and the incessant cry is "give, give." So should it be with the believer. To be satisfied with what he has, is a presumption that he really has nothing.

It must be evident to every one, that faith is from its very nature, and in reference to all things, susceptible of degrees. In this respect it differs from demonstration. There are all degrees of belief, from a state of mind in which doubt so far unsettles persuasion, as almost to change it into preponderating unbelief, up to that plenary conviction which excludes all doubt. The evidence may be either like the glimmer of a star amidst clouds, scarcely visible at times, or irresistible as the full blaze of a cloudless sun at noon-day. It is so in common matters, and it is so in spiritual ones. Strong faith then in regard to the latter, means a full persuasion of the truth of God's promises in the face of some difficulties which seem to oppose their performance. The putting forth of strength on any occasion, at least in the case of a creature, seems to imply a resistance to be overcome, and an effort to subdue it. In no possible case, can there be difficulties in the way of Omnipotence, whatever there may be in ours. Now

this is strong faith in a promise, to look at all the obstacles which seem to hinder its accomplishment, and yet to say, "No matter, though the difficulties were ten times as great as they are, it must be fulfilled, for it is the Word of God." It is strong faith, when we have nothing else but the Word of God to depend upon; and when, though all things else are against us, still we believe, without misgiving, that it will be accomplished. It is a great thing really to commit the soul, or even any of our greater temporal interests, to the simple promise of God, when we have nothing else to rely upon; and it is not only great, but difficult. "When," says Dr. Owen, "men come to close with the promise indeed, to make a life upon it, they are very ready to question and enquire whether it is possible the Word should ever be made good unto them. He that sees a little boat swimming at sea, observes no great difficulty in it; looks upon it without any solicitude of mind; beholds how it tosses up and down, without any fears of its sinking. But now let that man be required to commit his own life to sea, to that bottom, what enquiries will he make? What a search into the vessel? 'Is it possible,' he will say, 'this little thing should safe-guard my life in the ocean?' It is so with us in our view of the promises; whilst we consider them at large, as they lie in the Word, they are all true, all yea and amen; all shall be accomplished; but when we go to venture our souls upon a promise, in an ocean of wrath and temptations, then every blast we think will overturn it: it will not bear us above all these waves. Is it possible we should swim safely upon the plank of a pinnace in the midst of the ocean?"

This subject will be best illustrated by an example:

and I will take that of Abraham, as to whom the apostle has the remarkable words, "He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully persuaded that what he had promised he was able also to perform." Here was a promise given, that he should have a son; there were difficulties, apparently insuperable, he and his wife being past the age of procreation, but here also was Abraham's strong faith, he firmly believed that God would perform the promise, notwithstanding these difficulties. See how strongly it is set forth, every expression is emphatic, and I will therefore briefly comment upon each: "Against hope, he believed in hope;" all the arguments which could produce hope in him were against him. What ground could there be for expecting that two bodies, in this respect dead, should be the source and fountain of "many nations?" Yet notwithstanding all this, he believed in hope. Why? Because God had promised it. He had only the promise of God. No matter. He had that, and it was enough. He would for the same reason have believed if God had promised him ten sons instead of one. It is added, "He was not weak in faith." This is only the negative form of the other expression. It is mere weakness of faith, though some may think it strength of reason, that leads us to lie poring upon difficulties and seeming impossibilities which oppose the execution of a promise. Abraham not being weak in faith, thought such things not worth his consideration. It is a beautiful expression. He considered not the difficulties, did not take them into account, cast not a look at them, but considered only the promise. He was as much taken up with the promise as God was with the purpose; and difficulties

were as completely lost sight of by the omnipotence of his faith as they were by the omnipotence of God's power. This is the right frame of mind, to be so taken up with the promise, as to see nothing else but that and its performance. "He staggered not at the promise through unbelief." It is not merely said he did not fall only; he did not even "stagger." A man may stumble and stagger over a stone, who may not fall over a precipice: but such was Abraham's confidence in God's truth and power, that all the difficulties did not make him stumble even for a moment. His faith stepped over them all with the same ease as a giant would over an obstacle that would stop lesser and feebler men in their course. He had not unbelief enough to make him trip in his course, "but was strong in faith, giving glory to God." Here is the positive form of the expression: his faith was strong enough to believe without a moment's hesitation, that though now a hundred years old, and his wife coeval with him, he should be the father of many nations. His giving glory to God comes in very beautifully. Nothing honours God more than faith. This it is which treats God as being worthy of confidence. We are complimented, honoured, and gratified, when others who are dependent upon us say to us, "I fully confide in you," and so is God. Trusting in him honours him as a God of truth, wisdom, power, and goodness. Confidence is a homage to all God's natural and moral attributes at once. It is treating him as God. Little do Christians think how much God is dishonoured by their weak and hesitating trust, or glorified by their prompt and strong dependence on him. And what was the basis of Abraham's faith? "Being fully

persuaded that what he had promised he was able to perform." To settle ourselves upon the all-sufficiency of God for the accomplishment of things altogether impossible to any other being, is confidence indeed; and worthy of our imitation. It is also the wisdom of faith to pitch peculiarly on that perfection and power in God which is accommodated to the difficulties wherewith it has to wrestle. Is Abraham to believe that from his dead body must spring a whole nation? He rests on God as "he that quickeneth the dead." Were it necessary, I might dwell at equal length on Abraham's faith at a future period and another scene of his history, in reference to the child that was thus promised and given to him in his old age; and you would see that this act of confidence in God's truth and power was no less remarkable than in the present instance. "By faith Abraham when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: accounting that God was able to raise him up even from the dead." On the life of Isaac depended the fulfilment of all the promises which God had given to the patriarch, and yet now he is commanded to slay that son and offer him up in sacrifice. If Abraham had been surrounded by children, or if no promise had been made connected with the life of Isaac, his faith would not have been so remarkable; but when he had that only child, and all hung upon his one life, then to believe that it was his duty to immolate him, and leave God to find out a way to fulfil his own word, this was strong faith. He believed that if Isaac were reduced to ashes, God could and would raise him up again. There was no other way in which

the promise could be fulfilled; and in the persuasion of that, he stretched forth his hand and grasped the sacrificial knife, which in one minute more had been employed to slay even this precious child of promise. Illustrious believer! Illustrious faith! No wonder that Abraham is called the father of believers and the friend of God. I wish to point out the strength of his confidence as consisting in this, that he had nothing but the promise of God to rely upon; and believed that in opposition to the most formidable difficulties, it would be fulfilled.

If other instances were necessary, I might point to several individuals under the New Testament dispensation. The faith of the apostles and the first Christians in looking through the outward poverty and meanness of our Lord's appearance, and recognising under that forbidding exterior, the Son of God and the Messiah: a persuasion the more remarkable on account of the rejection of Christ by the majority of the Jewish nation and its rulers. The case of the Syrophenician woman mentioned in Matthew, is much in point as an instance and illustration of strong faith. I have already considered this, and now only refer to it. She would allow no obstacle to hinder her suit. Like Abraham, she, against hope, believed in hope. Her perseverance conquered the Saviour, and drew from him the language of commendation and delighted surprise, "O woman, great is thy faith." But perhaps the brightest and most remarkable instance of faith in all the New Testament is that of the penitent thief executed by the side of our Lord. I can never read that account without wonder. For this man in his own circumstances, and in the circumstances of Christ, to

recognise in him who was crucified at the same time and in the same place as himself, who was mocked and reviled by his enemies and abandoned by his friends, who cried out amidst his anguish, and acknowledged that he was forsaken by his God, who was challenged to prove his claims by descending from the cross, to recognise in him, I say, the Son of God and the Lord of glory, the King of heaven who had the seats of Paradise at his disposal; and to present to him that prayer, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom;" this was on some accounts the most extraordinary act of faith on record. Who would have thought of going to Calvary at the time of the crucifixion, and finding in one of the malefactors crucified with Christ, the most triumphant instance of confidence in the Saviour, to be found in the pages of the New Testament? What difficulties had his belief to surmount! Yet it did surmount them.

I now put in opposition to the foregoing, some instances of feeble faith. Several are at hand. The Israelites left the house of bondage in Egypt at the command of God, and under the positive assurance that he would conduct them in safety to the promised land of Canaan. With this command and promise, and with all the evidence which they possessed that God had thus authorised and warranted their expectations, no difficulties ought to have appalled them. Neither Pharaoh's host pursuing them, nor the Red Sea before them, nor the dreariness of the wilderness, nor the want of bread or water, nor the number or power of their enemies, ought to have disheartened them. True, their difficulties were often great. What then? Had not God promised to be with them? Was not the token of his

presence in the midst of them? They had the most positive assurance of protection and provision, and their obvious duty was to say, "No matter what obstacles or enemies lie in our way to Canaan; we shall go to it, and nothing can keep us from it." Instead of this, every difficulty filled them with fear, doubt, alarm, distrust, murmuring, and rebellion. Now here you see believing trust giving way to difficulties. They had the promise, but they doubted its fulfilment, till their doubts degenerated into absolute unbelief.

In the New Testament we meet with instances no less instructive. Peter walking on the water shows the power of faith; his fearing and sinking when the wind rose shews its weakness. He had the command of his Master to step down upon the waters, and though the waves had run mountains high, he was safe, and ought to have felt so. True, it seemed a perilous situation, but he had Christ's warrant for it, and he should have trusted that he deserved the rebuke he received, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" On other occasions the apostles appear to have doubted of their ability to cast out demons and work miracles, when difficulties greater than ordinary appeared. They had the commission and the ability, but they staggered through unbelief. I abide then by my definition of strong faith; it is a firm belief of God's Word in the face of difficulties, or what to reason appear to be improbabilities.

I must now attempt to distinguish faith from unwarranted presumption or delusion, with which some are but too apt to confound it. Faith is in all cases founded upon the Scriptures, or in other words, has for its object something which God has revealed, either in the way

of command, promise, or threatening, so that where there is no revelation there can be no belief. Now it is to be feared that some imagine the strength of this grace to consist rather in the confident persuasion of something God has not revealed than the expectation of what he has promised: they go beyond the line of revelation, and look for what is not included in any promise. With them a man is very strong in faith, when he has a very confident persuasion that he shall receive some good thing, either temporal or spiritual, which is no where specifically promised. Some have a very confident assurance of the conversion of a particular person: and this they call strong faith. But is the conversion of that person promised by God? If not, how can it become matter of faith? So in reference to any course of action, or to the result of any particular undertaking, many talk of having strong faith in its success. But has God promised this successful result? If not, how can faith be exercised respecting it? Our imaginings are not God's promises, and to trust to the former, without having the latter to support them, is faith in our expectations, and not in God's promises. Whatever we do must have the authority of a command or principle of revelation, expressed or implied, and whatever we believe must have the warrant of a promise either general or particular. But is there not sometimes an inward as well as an outward revelation, the belief of which is as truly faith as confidence in the written Word? That there was such in the case of inspired men is very true: and that even now in very extraordinary cases there may be such still, I would not positively deny. But such cases when they do occur, carry their own light with them, and verify

their Divine origin by the results. In ordinary cases, and such are almost all that occur, belief must be regulated by the Word and providence of God. Let it be once granted that strong faith means a strong persuasion of our own mind, apart from the Word of God, and we are exposed to every fancy of enthusiasm and fanaticism! It is this confounding faith with presumption, and taking impressions upon our minds as the objects or rules of faith, instead of the revelations of the Word of God, that have led not only to the wildest enthusiasm and the most extravagant mysticism, but in some cases to assassination and murder. The test of a strong faith is therefore not how much we can believe which the Scripture has not revealed, but how much we can believe which the Scripture has revealed, but which seems to be attended in its performance with difficulties which to human reason appear insuperable. To obtain this state of mind, therefore, we must not retire into ourselves, in order to quicken our own imaginings, or to stir up the depths of our own feelings, but must go out of ourselves and commune with the Word of God, and with God himself, through the medium of his Word.

I now go on to show in what circumstances, and in reference to what things in the Christian life, the strength of faith may be exercised and displayed. And here I may mention two distinct spheres of influence, or classes of objects, which call for this putting forth of a strong belief. The objects of the first class are spiritual ones. It is the work of a powerful belief to grasp and hold fast the truths essential to salvation, and confidingly to rest upon them, notwithstanding the doubts and difficulties which present themselves to

reflecting minds. A man may have not only true but even strong belief, and yet at times have considerable doubts, and feel many difficulties. To the enquiring and penetrating mind, difficulties will appear, from which less reflecting believers are happily free. The doctrine of the Trinity and the complex person of Christ; the sovereignty of God, and the responsibility of man; the atonement of the cross; justification by faith, and the work of the Holy Spirit; the resurrection of the body and the eternal state, will all at times present vast difficulties, and occasion some doubts. And oh, what mental agonies have some endured in struggling with these spectral forms of unbelief! The house founded upon a rock may be assailed by the storm and the flood, but that it stands against the assault is a proof of the strength of its foundation. The veteran oak of centuries' growth may be shaken by the wind, but the very fact of its resisting the blast is a proof how deeply it is rooted in the earth. So the strongest believer may be troubled with doubts and fears at times, which would entirely overthrow a weaker conviction than his. This, this is the mighty power of faith, its trophy as well as its triumph; when amidst all temptations from without, and all difficulties and doubts from within, the believer holds fast by the great truths of salvation, and calmly says, "I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day."

There is a very striking and instructive illustration and confirmation of this, in the life of Dr. Payson, which I give from memory, not having the volume by me. During a long season of affliction his mind was much perplexed and troubled by doubts, difficulties and

objections, which to his view at that time seemed to stand connected with Divine revelation. In so strong a light did these present themselves to his reason, that all the most formidable objections of all the infidel writers he had ever read, appeared to him as mere babble compared with those which rose up in his own mind; and he said he would not for the world publish his doubts, for he thought by doing so he should unsettle the faith of half Christendom. What must have been the power of his faith so completely to master the sophistry of infidelity in its most appalling forms and its most violent assaults, and with the force of evidence, to put this array of doubts, difficulties, and objections to flight? It is not the mind that has never doubted, (and that perhaps because it never examined or reflected), but the mind that has doubted and yet triumphed over its doubts, that exhibits the strength of true belief. The mind that grasps a positive proof on moral subjects with a tenacity that loosens not its hold under the counteracting influences of difficulties, is strong in faith indeed. Let it therefore be no source of perplexity to those who are thus troubled as if their faith were feeble and fluctuating, that they see difficulties hidden from less inquisitive minds; if at the same time they hold fast their confidence and the rejoicing of their hope, stedfast unto the end. Such doubts, as the celebrated Robert Boyle says in his beautiful autobiography, are in the souls of Christians, like the toothache in the body, painful but not mortal.

It is strong faith which enables sinners who have gone to great lengths in sin, and who have sinned amidst great aggravations, to believe and hope in the promise of mercy. Must we not admire the confidence of the

three thousand murderers of Christ, who on the day of Pentecost, within sight of Calvary, could so calmly expect such a sin to be forgiven? So again, what an assurance of faith had Saul of Tarsus, when the Lord Jesus appeared to him on the road to Damascus, that although his conscience was then burdened with the murder of saints, he believed even that crime would be forgiven. We may be sure that there is not in any one of our prisons a wretch so vile but that God is willing to blot out all the sins of his polluted life, and make even of that slave of vice and vassal of Satan, a child of God, the very next hour. But how hard for him to believe this! What confidence in the truth, mercy, and power of God, must it have been which enabled the scoffing, licentious, and infidel Earl of Rochester, to hope in Divine mercy! Not that it is more difficult for God to forgive such a profligate than the most moral person that ever lived; or that there is such a wide difference, all things taken into account, between sinner and sinner. But how many and how great are the obstacles which such sinners themselves see in the way of their own forgiveness!

I may also bring under review the case of notorious backsliders: especially the case of David. One almost wonders less at his commission of the crimes of murder and adultery, than that he could ever bring himself to believe that God would forgive him. I marvel at that power of faith which could hush the accusations of conscience, and the reproaches of his own soul, so far as to allow him ever to come into a state of peace. For him, under all the aggravations of his crime, its complexity, enormity, publicity, and season, so far to believe God's promises of forgiveness, as to

hope for pardon, and cry out in accents of praise, "O the blessedness of the man to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered, and in whose spirit there is no guile." Had he a right to this peace? He had. Was it proper for him? It was. How did he acquire it? By believing God's promise. Yes, if he had not come to this confidence and peace, he would have sinned against God by unbelief. True it is, that though he believed that God had forgiven him, he ought never to have forgiven himself; and while he had the peace which the hope of pardon should produce, he ought always to have preserved the profoundest humiliation and self-abhorrence. I do not say, as some have most incautiously affirmed, that the greater the sinner the more welcome to Christ; but I do say, the greater the sinner the stronger is his confidence in trusting in Christ; and the greater the confidence, the more glorious and welcome to Jesus. It is a sight for heaven to wonder at, angels to rejoice over, devils to hate, man to imitate, and God to delight in, to see a poor creature polluted with almost every sin, broken-hearted yet not despairing, penitent and turning with loathing from his sins, and yet confidently relying upon the mercy of God in Christ, for a full, free, and cordial forgiveness.

It is strong faith which enables the soul to hold fast its grasp on the truth, and its profession of Christ in the face of suffering and death. The apostle, as I have already said, conducts us for displays of this grace into the trophy-house of the church, and points us to those who through faith "were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection: and others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings,

yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonment: they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword; they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; of whom the world was not worthy: they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And these all have obtained a good report through faith." Ye noble army of martyrs, who looked at the cross of Christ till ye were inspired with a heroism to suffer on a cross yourselves, we see here the nature, the power, and the all-but omnipotence of that principle which enabled you to overcome the love of life and brave the horrors of a cruel death. Christ in all his glories, as he appeared to the martyr Stephen, standing at the right hand of God, must have been seen by you in those awful moments. Heaven, with its ineffable grandeur as it was surveyed by the apostle Paul in his rapture, must have opened to your view. Eternity, with its ever-rolling ages, as its perspective spreads out before the immortals, must have filled your field of vision. Faith, faith, gave a reality to all. It became the conviction of things hoped for, the confidence of things not seen. Nothing teaches us the power of belief in Christ like this. To see weak, timid, delicate women, who once trembled at the sight of blood and the sound of groans, so raised above the fear of death as to bear the exposure of the amphitheatre, the attack of wild beasts, or the agonies of the stake, with a heroism that surprised even their persecutors, how wonderful this! If the power of a cause be ascertained by its effects, what shall we say to this? Oh, what would it not enable us to do, if we were really to give ourselves up to its influence! A spirit of self-denial

and sacrifice is an instance of the operation of the same principle now. When we see a man surrendering the favour of his friends, his prospects of gain, the comfort and ease of his life, and the respectability and influence of his connexions, for the sake of the gospel, and thus enduring that species of persecution which is a kind of perpetual martyrdom, we feel that this also is the great fight of faith: such a man is not loaded with fetters, nor immured in a dungeon, nor burnt at the stake, but he is still one who demonstrates what is the exceeding greatness of God's power to those who believe.

The power and strength of this grace are exhibited in those who are eminent for the holiness of their lives, the spirituality of their affections, and the heavenliness of their aspirations; of whom it can be emphatically said, "They walk by faith, not by sight." In whose whole experience, their thoughts, feelings, and volitions, there is a marked and unusual predominance of the invisible over the visible, the spiritual over the carnal, and the eternal over the temporal. Their "conversation is in heaven." Having become citizens of the new Jerusalem, they conduct themselves accordingly, and appear to be, as well as feel themselves, strangers here, belonging to another state, and ever turning their attention homeward. Their eye is ever upward; their steps are ever forward. They act and endure as if their sympathies were with something else than things seen and temporal, and appear as if they were in communion with some one that is invisible. They have a real, personal, and intimate fellowship with Christ, even as if they saw him with their bodily eyes. The objects that surround them, and the scenes which are passing before them, affect them but little; for they are

habitually looking at others which infinitely surpass them. They do not give up their interest in this world, they do not abjure its social ties and charities; but they subordinate all to that other world which the Scriptures reveal. They love the house of God, and enjoy the means of grace. They are constant in prayer and reading the Scriptures: but they stop not in these outward observances, but pass through them by a living, vigorous faith, to God, and Christ, and heaven. There is about them something of the abstracted elevation and wrapt devotion of the recluse, combined at the same time with all that is practical, rational, and social, in the zealous followers of the Lamb. In short, they have a true, intelligent, and deep conviction of the great realities of the Bible, and they live under their influence, and walk under their power and constraint. They do not give a mere cold, heartless assent to these matters, but they embrace them and are persuaded of them. Jesus is precious to them. They see his glory and feel his inestimable worth. He is their righteousness and strength; and they live, abide, and walk in him. There is a mighty transforming power ever going on within their souls by faith in him.

Such persons have come to the assurance of faith. By which I mean a delightful consciousness that they have committed their souls into his hands and are safe. They have "the full assurance of understanding," which means a clear, comprehensive, soul-establishing acquaintance with Divine truth; or as Doddridge renders it, "the richest and most assured understanding of the gospel." This is introductory, and leads on to the full unwavering conviction of its truth, which is the full assurance of faith; and this ends in, and is connected

with, "the full assurance of hope." By the latter, as distinguished from the second, is generally considered a strong persuasion of our own personal interest in the blessings of salvation. Between the two there is an obvious distinction, one signifies belief, and the other a consciousness of belief. One expresses itself thus, "I do really and fully believe in Christ." The other thus, "I know I believe in Christ." But though they are distinct in their nature, they are inseparable in their existence. The belief of the gospel is the spring and origin of hope. We cannot hope if we do not believe; we cannot but hope if we do believe. If hope springs from faith, it follows that in proportion to the simplicity and firmness of our faith, must be the strength and liveliness of our hope. To say a man may have a very strong belief in Christ, and yet a very feeble hope, or a very feeble belief and yet a very strong hope, is something like a contradiction in terms. As is the faith, so must be the hope. A strong belief will produce very strong fruits of faith; just because a mighty principle in operation will be followed by proportionate effects. The fruits of faith must bear a proportion to itself. Hence the full assurance of faith must be followed with the full assurance of hope.

By this assurance, I do not mean a bold and confident method of speaking of our state, leading us to say, "I am as confident I am a child of God as if a voice from heaven declared it; and am as sure of getting to heaven as if I were there." All that is intended by assurance in Scripture, appears to me to consist in a satisfactory persuasion that we have so believed in Christ as to be interested in the blessings of his salvation, and to be enabled to look forward with pleasing

expectation to eternal glory. Such a persuasion admits of various degrees. If it be asked whence this assurance comes, I answer, not by any witness or testimony granted directly to the soul in the way of revelation or impression, but in the way of consciousness and by comparison of our faith as to its fruits with the Word of God, according to the declaration of the apostle: "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God."

You see then how to answer various questions concerning the assurance of hope. Is it of the essence of faith? As hope is a distinct thing from faith, and is rather the fruit of faith than its essence; so assurance is itself rather a fruit of faith than identical with it. Yet as hope inseparably springs from faith, there must in all sane states of mind ever be as much hope as there is faith; and if hope be weak, faith must be weak. It is often asked why so many Christians who are supposed to have faith, have no assurance? Many answers may be given to this. It is because many who really have faith, mistake as to the nature of assurance, by supposing it is a state of mind which for ever excludes all doubts and all degrees, and prompts a man boldly to say, "I am as perfectly sure of salvation, as if I were before the throne of the Lamb." I should rather put the case thus; "I feel I am a poor, sinful, guilty, lost creature, worthless, helpless, hopeless. But I really believe the record that God has given us of his Son. Here I place my hopes. Christ I am sure is my all, and I feel him infinitely precious to my soul. I dare affirm too I love him, and I am desirous and studious to

keep his commandments. Therefore though I hesitate to adopt in reference to my state the bold and confident language of some, yet I have no serious doubts that I am a child of God; and am actually living in the peaceful enjoyment of that blessed persuasion." This is the language of assurance. The man who can say this, is not only a believer, but he knows he is; and this knowledge is assurance. Another reason why so many professors are without this assurance is, because either they have no faith at all, or their faith is so feeble as to produce no hope, and therefore of course no assurance of hope. No wonder multitudes are without assurance: it would be a wonder if in their state of mind they really possessed it. Their possession of it would be the depth of deceit and the power of delusion. They have no deep conviction of sin, no solicitude after pardon, no joyful reliance on the Saviour, no peace in believing, no fervent love to Christ. On the contrary, they are so worldly and so careless, and so utterly destitute of all holy feeling, that they can have no consciousness of faith, no fruits of holiness. And often where there is, or may be supposed to be, a germ of this grace, it is so cramped in its growth, like a plant in an ungenial soil and atmosphere, that it never grows, and always appears in a sickly and dying state. I answer the inquiry how this assurance is to be obtained, by saying, observe the order God has appointed. Begin with the full assurance of the understanding. Get by study and prayer, a clear, rich, and full understanding of the gospel. Go on to the full assurance of faith. Open your whole mind and heart to deep, abiding, practical conviction of the great truths of the gospel. Come by faith into personal communion and friendship with Christ. And thus giving all diligence

you will come into the full assurance of hope unto the end.

I now go on to consider the exercise of a strong faith in reference to providential dispensations and things temporal.

It begins with a firm persuasion of an over-ruling Providence, so comprehensive as to include the destinies of empires and worlds, and so minute as to extend to individuals: a Providence which is ever active, directing, controlling, and subordinating all things to its own purposes and plans. It is a conviction of this great truth, so deep, so satisfying, and so tranquillising, as not at all to be shaken by the chaotic aspect of human affairs, the prevalence of gigantic evils, and the delays which occur in introducing the great meliorating processes and reforming means. A weak belief must give way before the deep mysteries, the confounding events, the defeats of what is good, and the triumphs of what is evil, which are perpetually going on in our world's history. The stream of Providence is so tortuous, so dark, apparently so turbid, and occasionally so devastating, that it requires faith at the full stretch of its power to believe that it is the work of God and not of chance; and that if the work of God, it is just, wise, and good. The page of history, both civil and ecclesiastical, is a problem to the solution of which nothing is equal but a profound, strong, and intelligent belief of the doctrine of Providence. Leaving the history of nations and of the church of Christ, and coming to that of individuals, we still find scope and necessity for the exercise of the strongest confidence in God. It is, of course, such an exercise, in dark dispensations of Providence affecting ourselves, to believe that all is from

God, and must therefore be wise, just, and good: to be able really to satisfy ourselves, as well as to say to others, "It is well." "I am sure it is right," says the strong believer. "I cannot tell how it is right. I cannot imagine for what special end it came. I can find no clue to the purpose, no key to unlock the mystery. It appears to me one of the profoundest secrets of that Great Being whose glory it is to conceal a matter. But I am as confident it is right as if the whole were transparent to my reason, and I could see the event in all its connections, bearings, and results: as if, instead of being wrapt in clouds and thick darkness, it were written and irradiated with sunbeams. I cannot see: but I believe. It is for God's glory and my ultimate benefit. I know that all things work together for good." The darker, the more confounding, the more disappointing the event, the stronger is the faith that assures us all is right. It is the belief of mysteries, the walking on amidst shades and darkness, grasping the arm of God, believing that he is leading us, and will lead us right, the giving up all into his hands, saying, "I cannot see a glimmering of light: I cannot see where to place my next step; but I can most implicitly trust in the wisdom, power, and truth of God. I follow like a little blind child, grasping the hand of his father."

Times of great straits and difficulties are seasons and opportunities for the exercise of this grace. God is always the Christian's best refuge, and often his only one. He is reduced sometimes to mortal extremity, and is compelled to say, "He only is my rock and my salvation. My help cometh from the Lord. No one else will help me, no one else can." He is shut up to God, and therefore to faith. Both sense and reason fail.

No door of escape presents itself, nor any way of relief. There is nothing left for him to do but to take up the promise and carry it in the hand of faith, and knock by prayer at the door of mercy, and as he stands there to say, "My soul, wait thou only upon God, and let thy expectations be from him. Yes, Lord, thou hast bid me come, when I could go nowhere else. And here according to thy command and promise I will remain, waiting and trembling, yet believing and hoping." The poor widow with her fatherless children, the pious honest tradesman in his difficulties, the Christian mother with hungry babes feeding upon her last crust, the friendless believer with no one to counsel, comfort, or support him, the devoted minister with his scanty supplies, and a thousand other cases of deep necessity and pressing want, have no other to look to but Him who heareth the young ravens when they cry: and there are among such some who have faith enough to say, "I am sure he will come and help me. My heavenly Father knows the necessities of his dependent child, and he will appear for me in his own time, and in his own way, and I will wait for him. My bread will be given me, and my water will be sure." This is strong faith.

The prospect of difficult duties, new situations of trial, and perplexing circumstances, calls for the exercise of this strong confidence in God. When God by a vision of glory called Isaiah to a special mission, his heart sunk within him under a sense of his vileness; but when God sent his seraphim, and with a live coal from the altar touched and purified his lips, he received such confidence that he said, "Here am I, send me." When Jeremiah was called to the prophetic office,

appalled with the difficulties which presented themselves to his mind, he recoiled from its responsibilities, and exclaimed, "Ah, Lord God, I cannot speak for I am a child." But when God reproved him for his timidity, and promised him his divine help and support, he yielded himself to the call and went courageously forward. So when Paul was converted from a persecutor to an apostle of Christ, no sooner had the Lord laid before him his mission, and promised to stand by him, than he accepted the commission and went boldly forward in his career. Yet what difficulties must he have known he should have to encounter! No matter, he had the promise of help from Christ, and though they had been a thousand times greater he could have faced them all; for he believed in Him. Whatever duties the Lord calls us to, he will most assuredly give us ability to perform them. Perhaps the most striking instance on record elsewhere than on the page of revelation, is that of Luther when cited to the diet of Worms. His friends attempted to dissuade him from trusting himself in the midst of his enemies. "You will be burnt alive," said they, "and your body reduced to ashes as they did to John Huss." What was his reply? "Though they kindle a fire the flames of which shall reach from Worms to Wittemberg, and rise up to heaven, I would go through it in the name of the Lord, and stand before them; I would enter the jaws of the behemoth, break his teeth, and confess the Lord Jesus Christ." One day when he had entered into an inn, and the crowd was as usual pressing around him, an officer made his way through, and thus addressed him: "Are you the man who has taken in hand to re-

form the Papacy? How can you expect to succeed?" "Yes," answered Luther, "I am the man. I place my dependence upon that Almighty God whose word and commandment is before me." The officer deeply affected, gazed upon him with a mild expression, and said, "Dear friend, there is much in what you say, I am a servant of Charles, but your Master is greater than mine, He will help and protect you." Here, in Luther, was courage, faith, and heroism, such as the world has rarely seen. Did the Lord Jesus leave his servant defenceless? He gave him a mouth and wisdom which all his enemies were able neither to gainsay nor resist. We are not called to such duties as those of the great Reformer, but there may still be duties which to us appear as much above our strength. Let us only satisfy ourselves they are duties, let us only take care that we go only where Christ has sent us, and undertake only that to which he has called us, and we may step as firmly, speak as boldly, and expect help as confidently as did Luther at the diet of Worms. No matter what scenes of trial, difficulty, or suffering, are before us, do they lie in the way of duty, are they of God's appointment? Then it is no presumption, but a part of the exercise of faith to say,

"Let earth against my soul engage,
And hellish darts be hurl'd;
Still I can smile at Satan's rage,
And face a frowning world."

And how shall we obtain this strong faith?

Let us earnestly desire it, for it brings glory to God: it is productive of great comfort and benefit to ourselves; it will be a glorious example to others; and it

will prepare us to enjoy the beatific vision with greater felicity. If we do not value it, we shall not covet it; and if we do not covet it, we shall never have it.

Let us contemplate the perfections of God; the glory of Christ; the truth, reality, and felicity of heaven; as set forth in the holy Scriptures. It is not by any working upon our own minds subjectively, but by contemplating the realities of Scripture objectively, that we shall grow in grace. By looking at the great objects of faith, we grow in faith. They draw out the acts which are appropriate to them. To grow in love with beauty, we gaze upon it. To be fired with moral excellence, we meditate upon it. Belief waxes stronger and stronger by meditation. It grows before the cross and the portals of heaven, and the throne of a faithful and covenant-keeping God.

Let us exercise what faith we have. Instead of despising the day of small things in ourselves, and refusing to believe, or to carry on a course of belief because it is so feeble, let us believe as we can, and continuing in this exercise, we shall by-and-by believe as we should. There are two extremes to be avoided, despising weak faith, and being satisfied with it. It is a sin to be weak in grace; but it is a mercy to have any grace. This grace, like every other, grows by exercise, therefore exercise it.

Let us contemplate the noblest examples among believers. The study of the eleventh chapter of the Hebrews would be of service to us. Yea, the whole of the Scriptures, both of the Old and the New Testaments, are full of biographical illustrations of the power of faith. Who can rise from the perusal of Abraham's history, or Paul's, or even of many uninspired pieces of biogra-

phy in which this great principle has been conspicuous, without feeling a perceptible growth of it in themselves.

Let us recollect our own experience: every one should be conversant with that. Perhaps there is no history which is so profitable to us as our own, when it is properly read. What fulfilment of promises, what dissipating of fears, what realization of hopes, what helps in duty, what comforts in affliction, do we find there! And of what service may these be to us as aids and props to our faith in its future exercises!

Let us pray for this great blessing. Lord, increase our faith, is a petition that suits us all. Whose faith does not need to be increased, and who does not desire this increase? That man must be a self-deceiver or a hypocrite, who does not covet to grow in grace; and he must be totally ignorant of the means of growth, who neglects to pray for the bedewing influences of the Holy Spirit, and the vivifying rays of the Sun of Righteousness.

CHAPTER X.

FAITH IN REFERENCE TO THE BLESSINGS OF THIS LIFE.

Earth is to its inhabitants neither a paradise nor a desert. If it have not all the beautiful scenes and productions of the former, so neither has it the dreariness and desolation of the latter. If the ground be cursed for man's sake, it is on the other hand blessed for Christ's sake. It is called in the language of poetry, "a vale of tears," but it is not less true that sometimes it is without the tears, and wears a smiling aspect, and reflects the light of God's graciousness and bounty. We know very well that man's chief portion lies in the blessings of salvation, and the hope of the life to come. These are so vast as almost to reduce all others to nothing. The possession of pardon, peace, and holiness, is so great a present inheritance; and the hope of an eternity of pure and perfect felicity is such an amazing expectation, as might render us absolutely indifferent alike to poverty and riches; pain and ease, obscurity and renown. How little would it signify to him who was going to take possession of a kingdom and a throne, whether he travelled through a desert or a garden, fared hardly or sumptuously by the way, or whether he had or had not all accommodations and conveniences on the road! His thoughts would be so engrossed with the permanent scenes of greatness, grandeur, power, and

wealth before him, as to be almost insensible to his present privations or comforts. So a Christian travelling to glory, honour, immortality, and eternal life, might be supposed to enter most fully into the apostle's exhortation, "This I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away."

Still, as by our bodily organization, we are made susceptible of pain or ease; by our mental constitution, of enjoyment or discomfort from surrounding objects; and by our social relationships, of gratification or disturbance; we cannot be wholly unaffected by the circumstances in which we are placed. Stoicism is no part of Christianity. And even the sight by faith of the glories of immortality, is not intended to annihilate the value of the blessings of this life.

It might seem to some that faith has nothing to do with the things of this world; that all its objects are invisible and eternal; and that the objects of sense cannot be the objects of belief. True it is that its highest exercises relate to that world which the eye of sense cannot reach: but still as there may be and are some adjuncts, some circumstances connected with the things of this world, which are as much matter of belief as the invisible realities of eternity, there is room for the exercise of it even in reference to these.

That this is the case is evident from the fact that they are not only necessary for our maintenance and comfort in this world, that the want or possession of them may

be made subservient to our spiritual welfare; but they are also the subjects of promise under the New Testament, as well as under the Old. It is in the former that we find the declaration, "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." It is there also we have the assurance, that if we seek first the kingdom of God, all other things shall be added to us. It is not said, Seek the kingdom of God, and grace and glory shall be given you; but the things of which Christ had been speaking, food and raiment. It is admitted that promises of temporal blessings occupy a different place and a much smaller space under the New Testament, than they did under the Old. Under the latter, they were, so far as the Sinai covenant is concerned, the principal incentives to obedience, and the removal or withholding of them, was the most frequent matter of warnings, threatenings, and punishments. Plenty, health, peace, and family comfort, while yet the spiritual blessings of the covenant of grace were so imperfectly revealed, and therefore so dimly apprehended, were the more frequent subjects of promise to the Jews. This evidently suited a dispensation, in which God dwelt among the people by the visible symbols of his presence, and over which he presided as its political Sovereign and Head. And there is no doubt that the bestowment of temporal blessings was more closely associated with obedience to the Divine command, than is the case under the Christian dispensation. The good things of the latter are "all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Hence the language and meaning of the apostle, when speaking of Christianity as contrasted in this respect with Judaism: "But now

hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the Mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises." No one can read the Old and New Testaments without being struck with the difference of the promised blessings in each, with the fact how little is said of spiritual blessings in the former, and how little is said of temporal ones in the latter. A fact which is replete with instruction, as showing not only the vast superiority of the Christian dispensation over that of the Jews; but also how incumbent it is upon Christians to let their spirit and conduct answer to their dispensation, in that eminent spirituality and heavenliness of mind, which are manifested in a supreme, constant, and practical regard to things divine and eternal. Still there are promises of temporal blessings contained in the better covenant, aud therefore room for faith in reference to them. And the various degrees in which God bestows these blessings, and the various exercises of mind which this difference of dispensation calls for, together with the helps or hindrances these things may supply to the divine life of the soul, afford ample room and opportunity for the activity of this holy principle of confidence in God. By the blessings of this life, we are to understand health, success in trade, wealth, and whatever pertains to our comfortable abode in the present world: and the question now is, in what way faith is maintained in regard to these. This may be done;

I. In regard to the Author and Bestower of them. God is the source of all created good: not only the Maker of all creatures, but of all the good that is in them. He is not only the Creator of all things, but by his providence the Disposer of all events. All individual

beings, all their relations to each other, all their adaptations to man's comfort, are to be traced up to his wisdom, power, benevolence, and arrangement. "In him we live, and move, and have our being." We not only believe the world is governed by general laws, that is by a connection of cause and effect invariable, except in the case of miracles: but we also believe that the mechanism of nature and providence is not like that of a clock, which, when wound up, may be left to go of itself; but is rather like that of a machine which requires the constant superintendence of the engineer, whose attention can never be dispensed with for a moment. Property, both personal and real, success in business, health, connections, elevation in life, renown, are all at his disposal. So true are the words of the apostle, "The living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy." Faith shuts out chance and regards providence in every thing. It is not enthusiastic and visionary, regardless of general laws; so neither is it pantheistic, resolving all into general laws. It adds providence to nature, and recognises God the Overlooker, Ruler, Regulator, as well as God the Creator. It stops not in second causes, but ascends to the great first cause; and traces every ray of prosperity, and every shade of adversity, to Him as its source. It admits the operation, and employs the instrumentality, for its ends, of all means which are suggested by reason, recommended by science, and approved by experience, and then ascribes the results to God. This is the especial province of faith. Science goes no further than the established order of nature, but faith goes on to Him that established it: faith without interfering with science, soars above it. Science stops in the vestibule

of the temple: faith led by revelation goes in and adores the Deity enshrined there. There may be metaphysical or logical difficulties connected with the doctrine of providence and its special interpositions, either to bestow temporal blessings or to avert temporal evils, under a system of government by general law, but the believer troubles not himself with these. He may not be able to state how God can interfere on his behalf, either without disturbing general laws on the one hand, or actually performing miracles on the other. It is enough for him to be persuaded by the Word of God that there are such interferences, and in this he confides, blessing God for the bestowment of every good as a gift of his hand, and submitting to every affliction as his wise and gracious appointment.

II. Faith regards the medium of all temporal blessings, and that is, the work of our Lord Jesus Christ. Man could no more have received temporal blessings without a Mediator than he could spiritual ones. But for the scheme of redeeming mercy, our race must have ended with the destruction of the first man. The sepulchre of Adam must have been raised in the garden of Eden, beneath the branches of the tree of knowledge of good and evil: there the history of man must have begun and ended, and his kind have been entombed with him. But God had purposes of grace and mercy, and man was spared, with reference to the coming of Him, whose advent was announced in the mystic terms of the first promise. This world from that hour became the scene of discipline and probation for eternity. To such a discipline and probation a mixed condition seems most adapted, in which much that is pleasurable to human nature is united with much that

is painful; in which much that calls for submission on the one hand, and for gratitude on the other; much that is the type of better things, and much that foreshadows more bitter pains in the world to come, are blended. All our blessings, therefore, flow to us through the medium of the cross, and it is the grand source of all temporal blessings as well as of spiritual ones. Not a ray of mercy illumines the dark domain of devils, none ever did or ever could, for Jesus died not for them. Every thing on earth that is good or pleasant, proclaims that we are in mercy's domain, all points to the cross as its medium, and to heaven as its design. The beauties of nature, and the bounties of Providence, as well as the richer blessings of grace, all are the expressions of the Divine benevolence, betoken God's good-will, and show the purposes of his heart toward us as regards a still brighter and happier world. The health that glows in our bodily frame should remind us of the better health of the soul which his grace is willing to establish; the success which follows our industry, and increases our wealth, is a memento to seek the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to lay up treasures in heaven; the respect or renown which we acquire among our fellows is an incentive to seek the honour which comes from God; while the possessions of earth, taken as a whole, are motives to possess ourselves also of "the inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away." All God's dealings in Providence with us here have reference to, and are connected with, his purposes of grace; and both together have reference to the mediation of Christ. It is indeed delightful, most delightful, to see all our blessings, our health, our property, our friends, our respectability, all tasting

of the love which was manifested in our redemption, all gilded with the glory of that cross on which the Saviour loved and died. So that it seems evident from this, that all men, the whole world, partake in some sense and in some degree of the benefits of Christ's death. The whole earth is the domain of mercy, because our Lord Jesus has come upon it to mediate between God and man. He d.d for the whole world, the whole world are invited to possess themselves of the spiritual blessings of his redemption, and do actually possess many temporal blessings. He causes his sun to rise upon the just and the unjust. Even the poor blaspheming infidel, who denies his mission and reviles his religion, is daily in the receipt and enjoyment of many blessings, not one of which he could possess, but for that Saviour whom it is his horrid business to deny and traduce. Yes, even he comes in for a share of the blessings of the cross, while with impious ingratitude he insults the hand that bestows them. But to the Christian the God of Providence is as truly an object of belief as the God of Grace, and every mercy of a temporal nature is additionally precious, as being redolent with the fragrance of that Name which is above every name.

III. Faith is exercised in the manner of seeking the blessings of this life. They are in themselves legitimate objects of pursuit. Who will deny that a man may seek health, or success in his lawful calling, or the respect and esteem of his friends and the public; or even renown in respect of his discoveries in science and inventions of art? These things are all right and good in themselves, and are only wrong when sought with inordinate desire, by improper means, or for wrong ends. This,

then, is the first operation of faith in seeking a temporal blessing; a persuasion that we are authorised to seek it, because it is one of those things which God has promised to bestow. This only can warrant us to seek it, to ask it in prayer, or to expect it. So that the first question we should ask ourselves, is this, "Am I really authorized to desire and pursue this object? Is it such as my circumstances, and situation, and the Word of God, warrant me to expect?" If a man desires such success in business as shall secure him immense wealth, or such advancement in life as shall raise him to the high places of the earth; it is evident that he is indulging a wrong desire and is setting out in pursuit of that which he has no warrant to expect. It being thus ascertained that the object desired is a lawful one, faith will express itself in prayer to God. What is the prayer of faith in reference to temporal blessings has been already explained in a previous chapter, to which the reader is referred. That it is lawful to make temporal things the subject of our petitions to God is evident from our Lord's prayer, where we are taught to say, "Give us this day our daily bread;" and also from the apostle's exhortation, "Be careful for nothing, but in every thing, by prayer and supplication, let your requests be made known unto God." Of course our prayers should be chiefly for spiritual things, and God is most pleased with such as are so; but they may and should also embrace temporal ones; and God does not despise even these. A kind father loves most the request of his little child for instruction in what will most please his parent or improve his own mind; but he does not reject his solicitation for some innocent gratification, or some infantine toy. Prayer, when sin-

cere, even in reference to temporal things, is itself an expression of faith, and a very high one too. It is acknowledging God in his existence, his attributes, his government, his providence. And how sweet a relief is it to the Christian's own mind to say, "I have laid my request down at the feet of my Father who is in heaven. I have committed the matter into his hands. He has the charge and disposal of it now. Infallible in wisdom, omnipotent in power, and infinite in benevolence, he must and will decide for the best." Prayer does not, however, discharge the christian from obligation to use the proper means to obtain the blessing sought. If he seek health, he will take advice and medicine; if success in business, he will be diligent; if the friendship of man, he will employ conciliation. To use means without prayer, is atheism; and to use prayer without means, is superstition; while to use both, is faith. To those who adopt the former, I say, "Fall down and worship God;" to those of the latter class, "Up and be doing."

It is an especial business of faith in seeking any earthly blessing, to keep us from using any improper and forbidden means to obtain it. This divine grace is too lofty and noble to stoop to base shifts and mean devices: too holy either to get good or avoid evil by sin. It will rather trust God, though it has nothing, and sees not how the blessing is to come, than go to forbidden means and sources to seek a supply. "Better," says the proverb, "is a little with righteousness, than great revenues without right." This aphorism, beautiful, and true as beautiful, expresses the disposition of a holy man never to help himself out of straits and difficulties by unjust or improper means; but to wait any time, in any necessities, in the way of God and duty. "Faith,"

says Dr Manton, "looks upon unjust gain as a certain loss; like flesh stolen from the altar with a burning coal in it, which fireth the nest of the bird that steals it." This passage may be read by persons who are in great perplexity and trouble about some danger or difficulty of a monetary nature, and who are anxiously looking round for the means of relief; a situation as pregnant with danger as it is with solicitude. Some forbidden but very promising means of assistance are presented to them. "Do that," says the tempter, "and you are extricated at once." "No," says the christian, "I believe in God, in Providence, in the Bible, in truth and justice; and I cannot, I will not, I dare not do it; but I will wait any time till God sends relief by better means; and if he do not, I will hold fast my integrity till I die. I will have peace of conscience though I am ruined." I believe that the man who has faith enough thus to wait for God's appearance, will never wait in vain. What scandals have been brought upon the Christian profession, and what disgrace upon some men's characters, as well as distress into their hearts, by their relieving themselves from monetary difficulties, by means not absolutely fraudulent, but dishonourable in their nature, and disreputable in general estimation! They had not faith enough in God to believe that he would help them in his way; and under the power of unbelief they helped themselves in their own, and brought a blot upon their character. Had they given themselves to agonizing prayer and to hopeful expectation; had they believed as they might have done, that if God did not avert the impending ruin, he would support them under it, they would have been saved

from disgrace, and very probably have been helped out of their difficulties.

The same trust in God will keep down undue care. It will enable the Christian to say, "I have now done all that diligence, prudence, and great exertion can do, all I dare do, all that can be done, to obtain the object of my desire. So that if I do not succeed, I shall have the testimony of my conscience that my failure can not be attributed to myself; and at the same time, the assurance of my religion that the cause of ill success lies with God, who does not see fit to grant me the desire of my heart: why therefore should I go burdened with solicitude, or torment myself with unnecessary care? I will lay the burden upon the Lord, and calmly and peacefully wait his will." This is faith.

Impatience is another state of mind which belief in God's superintending Providence will suppress. There is nothing more likely to rise up in our mind, when pursuing with strong desire an object which has been long withheld from us, than this. "Hope deferred maketh the heart sick." The eagerness of our wishes can bear no delay. We fretfully and murmuringly say, "How long?" To which God chidingly yet gently replies, "Be patient therefore unto the coming of the Lord. Behold the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and the latter rain. Be ye also patient: stablish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh?" To this the believer replies, "I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me. The vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end

it shall speak and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry." "The calm of expectation has stolen into my breast, and has tranquillized my fears, soothed my anxieties to rest, and made me wait serenely to see how it will go with me."

In seeking the advantages and comforts of the present life, we are in danger of envy. Others may succeed earlier and better than we, and may be in possession of what we want; and this may give rise to the most dreadful and tormenting passion that can possess the human bosom. Now "charity envieth not:" but charity is the work of faith. If we really believe that God disposeth of man's lot, the lot of our neighbours as well as our own, and that God is wise, sovereign, just, and benevolent, in all his dispensations; such a conviction will do much to extinguish those heart-burnings which are produced by the sight of another's superiority. Do you really believe that God has made the difference, that he had a right to give to your neighbour and withhold from you, that he does all things well, that he consults your good rather than your ease; that what is good for another might be bad for you, that he has given you far more than you deserve, that he has blessed you with richer blessings than temporal ones, that perhaps your spiritual ones exceed those of the objects of your envy? Do you believe all this? Then surely such faith will, in proportion to its strength, extinguish this dreadful passion. If, professing Christian, you give yourself up to the indulgence of envious feelings, either you have no faith at all, or your faith must be very weak.

In seeking temporal blessings, faith will impose moderation in desire, and repress inordinate ambition.

"Seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not." This advice of the prophet to Baruch is a word in season for us all. It is our over-fondness for the good things of this life that makes us impatient under its evil ones; and our ambition for greatness that makes us so indifferent about goodness. Men who are anxious to make a great figure in the world, usually make a small one in the church. As the tops of high mountains are usually barren, while fruits and flowers grow in the vales below, so the high places of the earth are as commonly bare of spiritual verdure, of the flowers of piety, and the fruits of righteousness. Belief in God will repress this immoderate anxiety after wealth. It yields obedience to the injunction, "Let your moderation be known to all men." "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." It fixes its eye upon better blessings, even spiritual and heavenly ones. It says to the Christian, "Thou art seeking a heavenly crown, and wilt thou inordinately desire a large share of earthly baubles? Wilt thou hinder thyself in the race, of which eternal life is the prize, by loading thyself with the cares and anxieties necessary to amass great wealth?" He who has opened his heart to such ambition must surely have let go his belief of a glorious eternity.

Dependence upon God is another thing which will undoubtedly spring from a belief that all blessings, even temporal ones, come from God. Much wisdom and strength, much prudence and patience, are necessary to succeed in life; and to succeed upon Christian principles, much forbearance, self-denial, and resolution to resist temptation. For all this we must depend upon God, and all this God has promised. "My grace is sufficient

for thee," is an assurance which every one may apply to his own case; that is, every one who wishes to be industrious without being covetous: who desires to be led in the middle path between ambition and indolence; and who in the pursuit of things honest, would not be led on to things superfluous; superfluous at any rate for all purposes but the indulgence of pride and the gratification of vanity. For this, let us depend upon God's promised assistance, and cherish in all our exertions a feeling of entire reliance upon him.

It is the work of faith to desire nothing that may be injurious to our spiritual interest. With a true Christian, his soul's salvation is the great thing, the one thing needful; and he considers that only as really good which is good for his soul. He has believed in Christ for life eternal. His heart has grasped this, and will not loose it; and therefore whatever is incompatible with it, he wishes not to have in his possession, and prays not to be allowed to let go his tenacious hold of this supreme object. This is his prayer, "Much as I desire this object of my pursuit, yet if in my ignorance I have mistaken that for a good which thou, O God, deemest to be evil for my spiritual interests, if thou seest it would bring a blight upon my soul, if it should cool my love for thee, or enfeeble my strength, or deaden my hope of glory everlasting, do thou in mercy withhold it; for I had better be denied any thing than be allowed to depart from thee, or for thee to depart from me." This is faith.

And the same state of mind will of course prepare us to bear the denial of our requests, and the failure of our efforts, with submission, contentment, and cheerfulness. It is faith to ask blessings from God with fervour; but

it is greater faith to take denials from him with placid resignation. If things fall out contrary to our expectation, they are not contrary to his wisdom; if against our wills, yet they are in accordance with his; and though against our desires, yet not against our salvation. We shudder at the horrid blasphemy of him who said, if he had been by when God made the world he would have ordered things a great deal better than they now are. Yet is there not a degree of this impiety in murmuring when things turn out otherwise than we desired? Do we not feel as if we could have ordered matters better? It is a beautiful sight and one too rarely beheld, to see a Christian calm and satisfied amidst the wreck of his hopes, and the bitterness of disappointment, and it is delightful to hear him say, "I have lost what I prized, but I am sure it is all right."

IV. I have to consider how faith exercises itself in the condition of those who possess the blessings of this life, especially in considerable abundance. It gratefully acknowledges, of course, the bounteous hand that bestows them. It does not say, "My hand hath gotten me these;" but, "God hath given them to me." It traces up every stream of comfort to him as the Divine Fountain. The believer is entirely convinced that he owes every thing to God's unmerited goodness. He does not merely look round with complacency upon all he has, but looks up with gratitude to his heavenly Father, from whom comes every good and perfect gift. His enjoyment of his mercies is elevated and sweetened by the assurance that they are the gifts of his Father's hand, and not the results of chance, or even the products of his own skill, diligence, and industry. He loves to view God in all things, and all things in God. His comforts

are so many mirrors from which the Divine benevolence is reflected upon him from every side. As he lies down on his bed in health, he says, "Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee." As he takes his seat at his well-spread table, he exclaims, "Thou makest my cup to run over." As he walks in his garden and enjoys his calm retreat, he lifts his heart in grateful acknowledgement for the Eden of his delight. As he moves onward amidst peace and plenty, respect and regard, he gives utterance to his feelings in the language of the psalmist, "What shall I render unto God for all his benefits towards me." Nor does he stop here, for he enjoys them as well as receives them, as the gifts of God; as blessings given to be enjoyed. When God was about to bring his people into the land of promise, he commanded them by the lips of Moses, "to rejoice in every good thing which the Lord their God had given them." And to the same effect is the language of the apostle, where in opposition to the ascetic doctrines of those who forbade the lawful enjoyment of God's gifts, he declares that "every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: for it is sanctified by the Word of God and prayer." There is no faith, but much positive unbelief, in a stoical indifference to the bounties of Providence. It is the province of this grace to preserve the due medium between idolizing and despising these lesser mercies. It does not eradicate our natural desires and delights, but directs their growth, prunes their luxuriance, and prevents their attaining a strength which would impoverish the plants of grace, and a height which would overshadow and chill them. When Adam was perfect before his fall, he lived in Paradise; and he enjoyed it

too. And he to whom God has given a garden of Eden now, or anything approaching it, may enjoy it also, provided, like Adam in his innocence, he sees God in every thing, and allows every thing to lead him to God. If a man does not enjoy his blessings, he cannot be grateful for them. That temporal blessings are to be viewed in subordination to spiritual blessings is very true, but this does not prove that they have no value. That a Christian derives his chief bliss from spiritual blessings is quite clear; and he is no Christian who in the midst of the greatest abundance does not say, "Whom have I in heaven but thee; and there is none upon earth I desire besides thee:" but to forbid a secondary delight in the good things of this world is sanctioned neither by reason nor revelation. The true frame of mind is that which "the poet of the sanctuary" has thus expressed, "Thanks to thy name for meaner things, but they are not my God." Yes, it is the promise and power of faith to lift up the possessor of earth to heaven; and perhaps this is almost its greatest achievement. For a man to take delight in heaven, and find his chief happiness in spiritual things when he has nothing else to delight in him; to repair to the fountain when all his cisterns are broken and the water spilt; to turn for relief to the light of God's countenance when every other light is put out: to give up the world when it has become a desert, and enter the garden of the Lord; is a far less triumph of faith than to be spiritually-minded amidst temporal possessions; to use the world and not abuse it; to enjoy an earthly Paradise much, but still to enjoy the hope of a heavenly one more. To him who can do this, we say, "O man, great is thy faith! What but the realization of the conviction of things hoped for, and the confidence

in things not seen, could enable thee thus to overcome the world, when it seemed all but certain it would conquer thee by its smiles?"

It is by faith that temporal blessings are sanctified to our spiritual good. That afflictions should do us good; that the want of temporal blessings should be sanctified to our good, is easily conceived, for it often occurs; but how seldom is prosperity the means of raising the tone of our piety, and increasing the power of godliness. This is the Spirit's rarest work. In this respect, the works of nature and grace seem to be unlike each other. The flowers and fruits of tropical climates grow with great luxuriance, and attain to considerable magnitude and beauty; while those of alpine regions and arctic temperature are dwarfish and stunted. But in the spiritual world it is amidst the cold blasts and the hard frosts of adversity, that the trees of righteousness and the plants of grace attain to their greatest stature and beauty; while they wither and droop under the warm sun of prosperity. Hence then, it is a glorious work of grace to grow holy by health, wealth, and renown. Yet there are cases, though they are few, of Christians whose mercies inflame their gratitude and love, increase their devotedness, and draw them into nearer communion with God. This should be the case with all in prosperity. Ought we not to love God, and hate sin more and more, in proportion as he blesses us? Ought we not to make his goodness a means of increasing ours? Ought we not to borrow from his gifts so many new views of the sinfulness of sin, as committed against a being of so much kindness and against so many motives for crucifying it? Ought we not in a spirit of self-mortification to pluck up the weeds of our

hearts, and bring them out to wither and die in the sunbeams of his goodness. But what can lead to this, short of the power of an ever-active faith in God, in Christ, in heaven, in eternity? And this can. As the bee wanders over the garden, and extracts the materials of honey from every flower, so does faith go through the earthly Eden of the Christian, and draw the materials of holiness from every comfort. It is well therefore to recollect that though the want of earthly comforts is a great judgment, the abuse of them is greater. So the possession of earthly comforts we account a great mercy, but the holy use of them is a greater.

Belief in the Scriptures leads the possessor of the good things of this life to employ them for God's glory and the good of others. Christian charity is in every case the work of faith. Why do not the men of the world employ the talents of wealth, rank, knowledge, and influence for the honour of him who gave them these things? Why do they lavish all God's gifts upon themselves? Because they do not believe that God gave them; or, if they admit that, because they do not consider that they were given to be employed for his glory, and that an account must be rendered to him in the day of judgment for the use of them. And why is it that professors of religion are so backward in their zeal, and so stinted in their liberality? Why is it necessary to use so much persuasion to induce men to give up their time, health, and property, for the promotion of God's cause? Why, but because their belief in God's Word is so feeble? Did they really believe that God has bestowed all this upon them for the promotion of his cause in the world; that he will require at the last day, a strict account of every farthing; and that he will

reward with his gracious approbation every act, sacrifice, gift, and labour, done in simplicity for his glory, would they not give largely and freely as he has given to them? A stronger faith in the church of Christ would render useless and unnecessary much of the logic and rhetoric which are now employed to raise funds for the support of our various institutions. When professors shall look upon their possessions with the eye of faith, the hand of liberality will at once be widely spread, and all that is necessary will flow forth without the bidding of man. It is a beautiful act of this grace to write "holiness to the Lord" on our merchandise and upon "the bells of the horses."

The completion of this work of faith in reference to the possession of earthly blessings, is to be willing to surrender them to God when he calls for them. We believe he gave them; we believe he preserves them to us; and we believe that he alone can take them from us. If health decay, it is he that touches our frame. If riches take to themselves wings and fly away, it is from his hand we receive them, and at his command they take their flight. Hence, the believer says, "I am immortal till God calls me hence. I am secure of my possessions till he takes them from me. And as he does nothing but what is wise, just, and good, and does not willingly afflict, or grieve the children of men, I am sure that he will not call me to give up any one good thing I possess but for a sufficient reason and in a proper time." There is something pleasant in this. A believer may cast away all undue solicitude about losing his mercies, and may sit down with an easy and unforeboding mind, assured that they will never be

removed from him but by God; and not even by him but for the best reason.

V. I now consider the case of those who are destitute of many temporal blessings. And they are the larger number in the family of God. Such persons are often in considerable perplexity. They read in the Bible certain promises, such as I have already adverted to, and they do not find them, at least in their own experience, to be fulfilled. They do not possess those blessings. To relieve their solicitude and help them out of their perplexity, I will make one or two remarks.

Promises of temporal blessings are not absolute, but conditional. They are made with an implied restriction that we shall have them in such kind, measure, and season, as God sees best. "They that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing." But then it must be left for him to determine what things are good. And ought it not to be left with him? Should we not wish it to be left for Omniscience to determine this? That is good for us, as I have often said, which is good for our interest and God's glory. Who can judge of this but God himself? Who would not rather have the matter put thus generally and conditionally, than to have it said, They shall want nothing, but have every thing, they ask?

The promises of temporal blessings are sometimes fulfilled in our posterity. "The just man walketh in his integrity, and his children are blessed after him." The blessing seems to lie asleep for awhile, and then it rises up in the seed of the good man as if the more vigorous for its slumber. It may be, he is put to hard shifts, and much labour, and some anxieties to provide

for his family, and dies and leaves little behind him; but God wonderfully blesses that little, and so his end is accomplished, though not during his life.

The promises of temporal blessings which seem sometimes to fail, fail through our own faults. We neglect to perform the conditions on which they are suspended, and lose the benefit through neglect of the means. We are not promised health without care to preserve it, nor success in business without ability, industry, frugality, and perseverance.

And now how will faith operate in those who after using all proper means to obtain temporal blessings are still destitute of them, at least to a considerable extent? They too must have recourse to the doctrine of an overruling, all-wise, all-disposing Providence. This comes alike to all, to those who have and those who want. They must conclude that he who gives to others withholds from them, and does so in the exercise of the same wisdom and the same love. He could have given to them if he would, and he would have given to them if it had been best that he should. He has not, therefore it is right. It is a quaint but true remark of Dr. Manton: "That is best for us which is fittest, not what is largest. If you were to choose a shoe for your child's foot, you would not choose the largest but the fittest." Would you not choose by the same rule for yourself? The armour of Goliath, weighty as it was, would not suit David, even Saul's did but encumber him. Adaptation is the essence of a blessing, all else are but its accidents. This is the language of faith, "That is best to me, which is best for me. And God gives what is best." This is wonderfully strengthened by the words of the apostle, "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up

for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things." A child may understand the logic of this fine argument. He that gave us in wonderful mysterious kindness Jesus Christ, his own, proper, only-begotten, well-beloved Son, to die for us upon the cross, to obtain for us salvation, how shall he not give us, any thing, every thing, all things else, which are necessary for our eternal welfare? What, asks the believer, did he give heaven's richest jewel for me, and will he deny me a little of earth's dust? Did he give me in Christ eternal salvation, and will he deny me a little present temporal comfort if it were for my good? I could as soon believe a monarch would give me his crown and deny me a crumb. No, his cross is to me a guarantee that I shall want nothing else that is for my good. I may be destitute of some things which others have; but having Christ, I must have all else, however little it may seem to be, which is necessary for my eternal well-being.

Hence the believer is conscious that if he be without temporal blessings, he has all spiritual blessings in heavenly things and places in Christ Jesus. "Christ has been made of God unto him wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." To him the apostle says, and he believes the declaration, "All things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." He believes that this is true in reference to him, and in the exercise of this belief he can bear the privation of many things which others possess. And then he looks up and sees all heaven opening to receive him, and pour its fulness into his soul; and looks on and sees eternity with all its ages waiting to swallow up

mortality in life. He feels that he wants but little here, and shall not want that little long; and that his present privations will only prepare him more exquisitely to enjoy the fulness of delight which is in the presence of God, and the pleasures which are at his right hand for evermore.

Under the influence of all these considerations he bows down not only with submission but with contentment to his lot. His faith reconciles him to every privation, and enables him to say, and triumph as he says it, "As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things."

CHAPTER XI.

FAITH EXERCISED IN REFERENCE TO AFFLICTIONS.

It is a painful fact that many a sinner walks in a flowery path to perdition, and goes merrily to his everlasting ruin. It is, on the contrary, as certain that many a saint travels by a rough and toilsome road to heaven, and ascends to glory amidst many tears. Our Divine Lord has set forth this in the most awful of his parables, the rich man and Lazarus. If we looked only at the outward and present condition of those two men, we should say one is the type of all that is felicitous, the other, of all that is miserable. But who that looks into the hearts of the two, and onward to their eternal abode, would not a thousand times rather be Lazarus with his poverty, sores, and beggary, feeding at the rich man's gate upon the crumbs from his table, than the wealthy possessor of the mansion, with his purple and fine linen and daily luxurious fare. Look up at the one having dropped all his poverty, borne by angels to Abraham's bosom; and then look down upon the other, stripped of his splendid garments, deprived of his luxurious living, and amidst his torments begging for a drop of water to cool his parched tongue, and there see the end of sanctified poverty and of unsanctified

wealth. Many are the afflictions even of the righteous. Notwithstanding they are the children of God and the heirs of immortality, even they are not exempted from the common lot of humanity, as described by the patriarch of Uz, where he says, "Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upwards." On the contrary, they are afflicted because they are the children of God. "For if ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons, for what son is he whom the Father chasteneth not?" The church of God, though "A little spot enclosed by grace out of the world's wide wilderness," is not, like Paradise, fenced in from sorrow. There is a tearless world, but it is reached through a vale of tears. As those who are exposed to such a variety and such a constant recurrence of trials, we need some principle to sustain us under them. We must either be petrified by the indurating process of stoical philosophy, into cold, lifeless statues, or we must find some source of consolation. It is but few who can reach to the apathetic insensibility of the former state; the bulk of mankind must find comfort or oblivion somewhere. We are in danger in times of trouble of resorting to many things that are inimical to our peace and to our holiness. Afflictions are not only evil in themselves, but are likely also, if care be not taken, to produce evil. They not only always lead to sorrow, but often to sin. A wounded spirit has frequently been the occasion of a burdened conscience. The wormwood and the gall of sorrow have fermented into the poison of iniquity, by impatience under the hand of God, and by revengeful feelings towards the human instruments of our griefs. How apt we are to sink into heartless inactivity, hopeless

despondency, sinful distrust, and overwhelming sorrow! In the dark and gloomy night of tribulation, when the sun of our prosperity has set, when the clouds of adversity have so overspread the heavens that not a star twinkles, and the tempest rages, how much we need something to cheer us, something to keep down those unbelieving thoughts of God and his Providence which are then so apt to rise, and to relieve that intense wretchedness which then too often takes full possession of the soul! And where shall we find it? What can do it? Philosophy? Miserable comforter! It may, as I have said, in some few cases, petrify the heart, and turn the man into a stone; though it can rarely do this, for nature resents the violence thus offered to it, and even from the rock itself drops will sometimes ooze, even if a stream does not flow. Reason may say to the sufferer, "Weeping will do you no good, it will not bring back the comfort you have lost, or remove the affliction under which you suffer." "No," says the patient, "and it is for that I weep, because my sorrows are remediless even by my tears." Will change of scene, or occupation, or business, or pleasure, bring consolation? No. They may divert the mind for a little while from the cause of its sorrows, and produce a temporary oblivion of them; but a lacerated heart carries its wound with it, and though its pains may be lulled, it receives no cure from this source. No. Faith, faith is the only thing that meets the case: and it does meet it. This glorious, wonderful, divine principle, which guards the prosperous man from being injured by his prosperity, sustains the suffering one from being crushed by his adversity. That which is the shade of one from

the scorching heat of the sun, is to the other, his refuge from the storm.

I will now show how faith acts in reference to afflictions.

I. In prospect of them. It suggests that as we are sinners in a state of probation, as sorrow more or less is the lot of humanity, and especially as God has declared that whom he loves he chastens, the true believer expects trials. He sees no reason why he should be exempted from them. This expectation, as I shall presently show, does not degenerate into gloomy predictions, painful forebodings, and tormenting anticipations (this were not faith but unbelief); but only checks the unfounded confidence which would lead him to say, "My mountain stands strong, I shall never be moved," and produce the surrender of himself to that fearless and excessive enjoyment of things seen and temporal, which is the essence of worldliness. Without at all lessening the proper enjoyment of present comforts, uttering a croaking voice, or throwing dark shadows upon the sunny path of prosperity, it simply says, "Since God has forewarned you to expect trouble, do not be immoderate in your joy in the gourd, or trust in it as surely as if you thought it could not wither." Faith thus acts the part, not of an envious ill-wisher, but of a faithful monitor.

At the same time it believes that no evil can come except God sends it. This is its triumph, to look into the dark unknown future, and to rest assured that no evil can come forth from the impenetrable cloud unless at his bidding. True faith throughout its whole course grasps the doctrine of Providence, as the traveller does his staff, upon which he leans equally in sunshine and

in storm, which keeps him alike steady in slippery and in rocky paths, and which, whether his way be up hill or down, is still his support. This will account for its frequent introduction in these chapters.

The shafts of sorrow fly thick around us, but not one can hit us, except its flight be guided by unerring wisdom. Job said, "Why hast thou set me as a mark against thee, so that I am a burden to myself." An expression which, if it imply terror as though God were shooting at him, implies also consolation that no arrow could touch him but one from His bow. So when the Christian sees trouble coming, he knows whence it comes, and that it cannot come except God permit it. Oftentimes the storms of Providence, like those of nature, are a long time gathering. We feel the sultry heat, the stagnant atmosphere, and observe the electric clouds, and are prepared for a thunder storm: we stand watching the masses accumulating in the horizon, with something of awe, yet amidst the apprehension which is awakened, we consider that it may after all disperse and not discharge; and even if it should come, we know that God rides upon the whirlwind and manages the storm; and that it can do no harm but what God permits and appoints it to do. "He maketh darkness his secret-place; his pavilion round about him is dark waters, and thick clouds of the skies." Therefore fear not:

> "Thou trembling saint, fresh courage take,
> The clouds you so much dread
> Are big with mercy, and shall break
> In blessings on your head."

It is the assurance of faith, that if the affliction should come, it will bring its own support with it.

Oftentimes the trial, like mountains, appears larger and higher at a distance than on our nearer approach; and like most dreadful things, less terrific when we are close to it than when it is seen from afar. Familiarity, which diminishes our delight in what is pleasurable, does the same with our horror of what is painful. But let it be all that was feared, still the Christian, when trustful in God, says and ought to say, "If God should not lower the coming trial to my present weak faith he will raise my weak faith to the magnitude of the coming trial. The affliction may not be all I now fear; but if it should, my God will make his grace sufficient for me to bear it. He will not send the trial, but bring it. And I have his promise that he will never leave me. I hear him saying to me at this moment, 'When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. Fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.' What then ought I to fear, can I fear, shall I fear? I will go forward to meet the coming affliction; for I am going on to meet an all-wise, all-gracious, all-powerful God."

Faith takes the mind off thus from painful anticipations of the future. It complies, to its own happiness, with the merciful admonition of Christ, "Take therefore no thought for the morrow; for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." This is a great and most merciful exhortation; but no man in prospect or fear

of trouble can very easily obey it, till he believes that as God is taking thought for the future on his behalf, he need not himself be anxious about it. Reason, I know, suggests that he who does not with solicitude anticipate future evil till it comes, suffers it but once; while he who is always anticipating it, suffers it as many times over as he thus thinks upon it. Still nothing can keep down these gloomy forebodings, but the assurance that God cares for the future as well as for the present.

The mind thus taken off from a painful and unnecessary anticipation of future evil, is left to the performance of present duty. This is a most desirable course of action. If some people are so much taken up with the present as to forget the future, which is a possible and by no means an uncommon case, for there is usually some provision to be made for the future; on the contrary, there are many who are so much taken up with the future as to forget the present. Their fears of contingent evils rise so high as to unfit them for the discharge of certain obligations which now press upon them. There is always some duty immediately pressing, from which no probable, possible, or even certain, future trial should divert us. It is always an additional aggravation of affliction when it comes, to look back and see something neglected, and thus to go laden with the guilt and enfeebled by the influence of past sins, to encounter future trials. Oh, it is of immense importance to keep a conscience void of offence, not only for present comfort, but for support under coming afflictions! Inconsistencies are sure to find us out in the dark season of affliction, if not before. We need not add to the gloom and sorrow of that dreary hour, by the guilt of past sins, either of omission or commission; but on

the contrary, should seek among other consolations, to have "our rejoicing in the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, we have had our conversation in the world." Close walking with God is as much our interest as it is our duty.

Here, perhaps, a question will arise in some minds, whether it is compatible with faith, to pray to God to avert an approaching affliction. Most certainly it is, as much so as it is to pray for deliverance from present trials, and as it is to use all proper means for that purpose. Grace does not produce insensibility to trials; for if there were no feeling, there could be no patience. Submission is our duty; and it implies something felt to be an evil, which the mind resigns itself to in obedience to God. But it is quite compatible both with faith and submission to pray for deliverance from tribulation, whether threatening or endured, provided our prayers are submissive, and we are willing after all to leave the matter to the Divine will, and stand prepared to acquiesce in the answer God may be pleased to give. The very petition to have the affliction averted or removed is itself an act of faith, since it is an expression of our belief in the providence of God. We have, to prove the lawfulness of prayer for the averting or removal of afflictions, innumerable promises, precepts, and examples in the Word of God; especially the highest of all examples, that of our Divine Lord, who in prospect of the sufferings he was then enduring, and expected yet to endure, prayed and said, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt."

II. I consider the exercise and influence of faith

under affliction. The expected trial comes on. God has not seen fit to avert it. The storm bursts upon the head of the sufferer, and what are his views and feelings now as a believer? Faith first of all considers sin as the cause of sorrow. The believer traces up all his afflictions to this as their original source and cause. Suffering with him is not the established and original order of nature, it is the consequence of the disturbance of that order, the disarrangement of that first beautiful scheme and framework, by sin. God did not make man to suffer and weep, and he never did suffer and weep till he sinned. The geologist clearly perceives in the broken and confused strata of the earth's crust, not the original and undisturbed order of primæval creation, and regular and unimpeded deposits, the silent and uninterrupted work of nature; but the proof of some mighty disturbing force which has upheaved the masses and thrown all into apparent confusion. So is it in the moral world. All was order, beauty, and bliss, at the beginning, but sin with volcanic force has disturbed, broken, and confounded all. This is declared in God's word and received by the Christian; and it is of wonderful potency to bring him to submission and to enable him to justify God in his severest dispensations. He never loses sight of this guilty cause of all his sorrows. Nor does he satisfy himself with going back to the sin of Adam, that first offence which brought in sin, death, and all our woe; but he dwells upon the ten thousand sins both of omission and commission of which he has himself been guilty, and with devout humiliation under a deep sense of his own desert, he exclaims, "He hath not dealt with me after my sins, nor rewarded me according to my iniquities. Wherefore should a man

complain, a living man for the punishment of his sins. I will bear the indignation of the Lord, for I have sinned against him." This is faith.

It also recognises God as the Author of his affliction. "I was dumb," said the Psalmist, "I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it." The believer sees God's hand, and realises God's doing in his sufferings. "No man should be moved by those afflictions," said the apostle, "for ye know we are appointed thereunto." But faith not only recognises the hand of God, for many an unconverted man does this, but the hand of God as a Father. It is this which is its peculiar act. It does not merely believe that the God of providence is in the trial, but the God of grace. Its language is not only "God hath sent it," but "my Father sent it;" and while the worldling sullenly exclaims, "It is the will of God, and I suppose I must submit:" the believer says, "The cup which my Father giveth me to drink, shall I not drink it?" It is persuaded (for God has said it), that "whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." But this is a secondary act of belief reflected from a primary one. It is the act of one who has already believed in Christ for the salvation of his soul; of one who has really become by faith a child of God; of one who with an unwavering tongue can say in the spirit of adoption, "Abba, Father." And it is surprising how many are enabled thus to come to God in affliction, who are filled with doubts and fears at other times. It is of infinite moment for the believer to keep up his sense of this paternal character of God, and his own filial relationship to him. A child will take that from the hand of his father, which no one else could persuade him to receive.

In conformity with this, faith considers love as the motive on God's part of all afflictions. They not only come on those whom God loves, but because he loves them. They are love tokens, as much so as any thing else that comes from the hand of love. The father chastens his son in love, gives him medicine in love, denies him some things he asks for in love. It is the severity of love, I admit, but still it is love, and a contrary line of conduct would not be love. But often it requires strong faith to believe this. "What, this love, to wither my gourd, and scorch my head by the sun, and beat upon me by his hot fierce blast? This love, to shatter my cisterns and spill their water upon the ground? This love, to frustrate my schemes and disappoint my hopes, and strip me of my comforts and leave me spoiled and peeled? This love, to fill my eyes with tears and my bosom with sighs?" "Yes," replies God, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten." "Enough," says the Christian in his best mood, "Enough, I believe it: and my soul is even as a weaned child." See him when in that frame, he not only "hears the rod," but kisses the hand which uses it. What can we not endure from the hand of love? Let me be assured that a friend loves me and that tenderly, and that all his conduct is dictated by affection, I can bear his reproofs, though they may be somewhat severe. I can submit to his requirements, though they may seem to be rigid. I can allow him to take from me some things which I value, though I may not see the necessity of the sacrifices. My entire confidence in his affection leads me to say, "It must be necessary for my welfare, or I am sure his love would not thus put me to pain. It cannot be to sport with my feelings and see me weep, that he acts

thus. I am sorrowful but trustful, for he is wise and he loves me."

Faith is assured that there is a necessity for our trials. There is no Scripture it more readily assents to than that of the apostle Peter, "If needs be ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations." Yes, there must be some kind of necessity, or he who loves his children so strongly would not thus afflict them. He himself is the judge of that necessity, and with him it must be left. But we are in all cases to be assured that it exists, though oftentimes it is hidden. Hence, the beautiful reply of Dr. Payson, when asked amidst deep affliction, if he saw any particular reason for his heavy trials. "No," said he, "but I am as satisfied as if I saw ten thousand reasons. It is the will of God, and there is all reason in that." Our trials come sometimes when there seems, so far as our spiritual condition is concerned, less need than ordinary for them. And then is the time especially for confidence in God's wisdom and love as to their necessity. When they find us in a backsliding state, and come like messengers to fetch us back from our truant wanderings, we know, rather than believe, their necessity. We see and feel it as clearly as if a voice from heaven declared it. But to be overtaken by some severe visitation of Providence, when the soul is comparatively healthful, and its course is even and undeviating, and then to say, "I am sure there is some needs be for this, though I cannot see it. It lies hidden somewhere in the depths of God's wisdom and love, where I cannot find it; but I am sure it is there. My heavenly Father does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men, much less his own children: and I believe I am one of them." This is indeed faith.

It is also assured that the design of affliction is good. How beautiful is the language of the apostle: "We have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness." Yes, such is the imperfection of human love, that even parental affection is sometimes poisoned and misdirected by passion; and the father corrects his child intemperately, and more from caprice than from judgment, and rather for the indulgence of his own stormy temper than the child's good. There is nothing like this in God. The Divine Father never corrects in a passion; but proceeds to his chastisement with the coolness and calmness of a judge, the love of a parent, and the purpose of a physician. "He for our profit," never for his own gratification, but always for our good. Certainly not for our ease, "for no affliction for the present is joyous, but grievous;" but for our good. He is not indifferent to our present tranquillity and comfort, as is evident from the thousand mercies with which he has surrounded us; but he is chiefly intent upon our good: and when the two are in any measure incompatible with each other, he never hesitates for a moment which he will make to give way to the other. A wise surgeon is not indifferent to the comfort of his patient; but when the question is ease and death, or pain and life, he takes up his knife and proceeds, with as much tenderness as possible, but without delay, to amputation. He consults life first, and ease only subordinately. So does God. His aim is our profit, that is, "That we might be made partakers of his holi-

ness:" that we might be made partakers of the Divine nature, sharers of the very holiness of God. How precious a thing must holiness be in itself, and how precious it ought to be to us, when God, who loves his people with so strong an affection, puts them to so much pain to obtain it!

And just glance at the good that afflictions are calculated to effect, and do effect in all cases where they are sanctified. As the bee sucks honey from many a bitter herb, so faith extracts good from bitter sorrows. How they crucify a man to the world, and the world to him; sometimes gently drawing him away from it, at others forcing him out of it as by a violent wrench; thus making his own cross affect him in the same way as the cross of Christ does. How they mortify his pride and cure his vanity! How they restore him from his backslidings and bring him again to God from whom he has departed! How they revive his lukewarm religion and quicken him in prayer! How they make him feel that religion is after all his great concern! Yes, there is more learnt sometimes in one great affliction, than from a thousand sermons, or a library of books. Who would dare to present this prayer? "Lord, let me have worldly comforts though they ruin me; and keep away affliction from me, though it would save me." And why should we act as we would not pray? Should we quarrel with the man who, in pulling us out of the water, where, but for him, we should have been drowned, put our leg or arm out of joint? And shall we murmur when God, in saving us from perdition, lessens our comforts? Is it not a blessed exchange to part with temporal comforts for inward holiness? Who would not be willing to have less of the world, if thereby he might have more

of God? Who would not be kept poor in wealth, if he might be rich in faith? Who is the loser, if he have like Gaius, a healthy soul in a sickly body? This is the good to be gotten by afflictions, and it is the business of faith to believe the declaration that "all things work together for good to them that love God, who are the called according to his purpose." While there is in the love of the world a dreadful power of turning all good things into evil, there is in the love of God as happy a principle to turn all evil things into good. This wonderful transmuting operation is ever going on in the life of a Christian, laying all his outward calamities, inward conflicts, sicknesses, losses, dark seasons, and mental perplexities, under tribute to promote the good of his soul, his eternal welfare. All these things are working together for good. Infinite wisdom and Almighty power do not work by means and agencies apart, but in concurrence and combination. They keep in order by their co-operation what might otherwise appear a vast confusion of things. But for faith in this, the believer, looking on the crowd and tumult of things, might be utterly distracted in his calculations and hopes. He beholds a thousand different things in action, each doing something, and some doing what seems to oppose the others. And how can they all, so various, so different, in some respects so contrary, produce a common result? Faith is assured there is a stupendous, invisible machinery, which holds all in connection, and reproves the unbelief which says, "This is absolutely needless, or obstructs rather than co-operates or conduces to good."

It also believes that God does no more than is necessary for this end. Tender is the language of the prophet, "In measure, when it shooteth forth, thou wilt debate

with it: he stayeth his rough wind in the day of the east wind." Analogous to this is God's language to the Jews, "I will correct thee in measure." Hence the pleading of the prophet, "O Lord, correct me, but with judgment; not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing." Wise physicians adapt not only the nature of the medicine to the disease, but its quantity to the strength of the patient. They administer as much as is necessary to produce the desired effect, and no more. This is God's method. All the afflictions he sends are by weight and measure; as wise in their proportions as they are in their adaptations.

Faith looks for comfort, support, and direction during the season of trial. It expects that, "as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ." It does not shut up the windows of the soul, and retire desponding and disconsolate to sit in darkness, because some little light within has been extinguished, but keeps them open for the glorious light of the sun to shine in and enliven the scene. It does not amidst broken cisterns, turn away from the fountain, but goes straight to the living water. It does not, like Rachel weeping for her children, "refuse to be comforted," but acts like a child in tears for some loss or insult, who runs to his mother for her sympathy and comfort, and confidently expects her sweetest kindest words. It says, "Where is he that giveth songs in the night?" And then serenely expects his approach with his richest consolations. It is unbelief which says, "He has forgotten to be gracious; he has in anger shut up his bowels of compassion, and is clean gone for ever. I shall never see good."

And the believer looks for support as well as con-

solation. He is confident that God will lay no more upon him than he will enable him to bear. He believes that God will reduce the burden to his strength, or raise his strength to the burden: "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able to bear." "I believe that," says the Christian, "and though the load seems to increase rather than diminish, yet I take hold of God's strength, and hope to be sustained, for

> 'How can I sink with such a prop
> As my eternal God?
> Who bears the earth's huge pillars up,
> And spreads the heavens abroad.'

I might as soon believe the Alps would sink under an accumulating weight of snow, as imagine that a soul that leans upon Omnipotence for support, would be crushed by any weight of trouble; so that if I am not delivered, I shall be sustained; and to be sustained is a degree and the commencement of deliverance.

Direction is as necessary in many cases, as consolation and support. There are afflictions in which nothing can be done, and we seem to be commanded, like the Israelites at the Red Sea, to "stand still and see the salvation of God;" cases in which the sufferer is addressed as were the Israelites in reference to their seeking help from Egypt: "Thus saith the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel; in returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength. Your strength is to sit still." Then patience and not action is called for. But there are cases where something is to be done; and direction is needed from God to know what that is. Difficulties often add great weight to trials. The Christian sees that he must

immediately come to some determination, but he is most distressingly at a loss to know what course to pursue, and even what step to take next. A wrong one may plunge him still deeper into distress, and render his case all but hopeless. He well knows that necessity is a bad oracle to consult, an evil counsellor, and what shall he do? Do? Believe the promise: "The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way." "Yea," saith God, "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go; I will guide thee with mine eye." This promise the believer turns into prayer; for which no words are so suitable for us to carry to God, as those which God has first spoken to us: "Teach me thy way, O Lord, and lead me in a plain path, because of mine enemies." He then looks to the end of his afflictions. The end may sometimes come in this world. But the utmost that the believer can be sure of is, that they will end in God's time. They may last for his whole life. The sickness which afflicts his body may be unto death. The loss which he has sustained in his property may be irreparable, and poverty may go with him to the grave. The trial which beclouds and distresses his spirits may be his lot for life. But on the other hand, it may not: God may be bringing him "through fire and through water to bring him out into a wealthy place." He leaves the matter in the hand of God, and endeavours to maintain a hope which will save him from despondency, checked at the same time by a fear that will guard him from unwarranted confidence. It is this waiting posture, this season of suspense, during which the Christian is saying, "As soon as I shall see how it will go with me," that is the testing time of confidence in God. Can he then keep his mind

calm, hopeful, and cheerful? Can he then wait for God's deliverance without resorting to any sinful means of his own? Can he then unite patient endurance with wise and prudent activity? But if the end should not come in this world, it will in the next; when afflictions will not only cease for ever, but leave an eternal blessing behind. Here it is impossible to forget or omit the language of the apostle: "I reckon that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Four things are set forth in these passages. First, the actual termination of our afflictions. This is sweet. They are to end: they are not to last for ever: the last pang, and groan, and tear, are at hand: and how near the Christian never knows. Secondly. But they are not to end like those of the brute creation, in the grave merely, but in heaven. The last pang, and groan, and tear, are to usher in that blessed state of which it is so beautifully said, "The Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." Heaven, and not annihilation, will terminate the afflictions of the righteous. Thirdly. Heaven is so glorious that the first view of its scenes, and the first moment of its enjoyment, will make amends for the longest life of the most complicated and intense suffering. Fourthly. The sufferings of earth will enhance and increase the felicities of heaven. Oh, the wonderful antithesis, the inconceivable contrast, glory set over against affliction; weight of glory against light affliction; eternal glory against momentary affliction! In

this sentence, not only brilliant with the lustre of golden, but radiant with the splendour of heavenly, characters, the genius of the apostle soared to one of its highest flights, or rather was borne away by the spirit of inspiration to the threshhold of heaven. At that moment, the veil that hides the holy of holies and conceals the enthroned Deity from the gaze of sense and of reason, was half-drawn aside; and in dazzling, although vague, glory, the Ineffable appeared to his enraptured gaze. To our future glory the sufferings of the present time will contribute. They will aid by their previous endurance, to increase our joy by the contrast; and they will, by the graces they call into exercise, by the sanctification they promote, by the heavenly temper which they cultivate and cherish, be the means of ripening our spirits, and making them meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. Every tear that is shed, every groan that is heaved, every loss that is sustained, every suffering that is endured, every disappointment that is experienced, if borne with patience, with resignation, with unwearied holiness, will not only be followed by millions of ages of ineffable felicity, but will prepare for that felicity, and add something to its weight and its lustre. To believe this, to live in hope of it, and by this hope to be sustained under present sufferings, is the work of faith.

III. This grace has something to do with afflictions when they are past. It believes that God has removed them, and is grateful for the deliverance. We may have employed means and instruments, and they may have been adapted to the purpose: but who gave them efficacy, and rendered them successful? General laws were in operation; but so they were when former efforts

failed: who secured the result this time? A deliverance from affliction will lose half its sweetness if he who experiences it has not a sense of the Divine interposition in it. How we ought to dwell upon deliverance from affliction may be learnt by reading the one hundred and third and one hundred and sixteenth Psalms; and the twelfth chapter of the Hebrews. How most men do conduct themselves when the affliction passes off, may be learnt from the conduct of the lepers whom Christ healed; of whom he said, "Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger!"

But the belief that God's omniscience was witness of all our prayers, penitence, and vows, during the season of trial, will lead to solicitude that we should remember them (as he does), and perform all we then promised or professed. Most people who have any sense of religion at all, are apt in seasons of deep trouble, especially of alarming bodily sickness, when death seems near and eternity opening, to make solemn promises and vows of amendment. But alas, how few of them are of the mind of David, who makes frequent mention of his determination to perform his vows! "I will go into thy house with burnt offerings; I will pay thee my vows, which my lips have uttered, and my mouth hath spoken, when I was in trouble." To forget these is a species of unbelief, for it is to act as though God had forgotten them. Usually it is better not to vow any act, but to pray for grace to do it. But prayers are in themselves nearly as solemn and as binding as vows. A believer therefore must be very mindful of the state of his heart while he was in trouble, and endeavour afterwards to make his conduct conform to it. Jeremiah thus

recollected his affliction when he said, "Remembering mine affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the gall. My soul hath them still in remembrance, and is humbled in me."

To get benefit from past afflictions, we must call them to remembrance. "Afterwards," saith the apostle, "they yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness to them that are exercised thereby." There is no doubt that in some cases they are more profitable in recollection than in endurance. The mind at the time is too much occupied and agitated by pain or tumultuous thoughts to derive all the benefit they are calculated and intended to afford. How anxiously should the recovered sufferer look out for these after fruits of righteousness. "Affliction," says Manton, "is a tree that to the true and watchful believer bears good fruit: and we do not expect the fruit to form and ripen at once. It may be long maturing, but it will be rich and mellow when it is ripe. It frequently requires a long time before all the results of the affliction appear, as it requires months to form and ripen fruit. Like fruit, it may appear at first sour, crabbed, and unpalatable; but it will be at last like the ruddy peach or the golden apple." An affliction sanctified is better than an affliction removed. And there is no affliction a Christian should more dread than an unsanctified one. They never leave us as they find us, but more hardened if not softened. It is fearful then to trifle either with the word or with the judgments of the Lord, and it is difficult to say which is the more dangerous.

Faith improves past afflictions by encouraging us to trust God in future ones. This is one of the after fruits, a serene and tranquil state of mind with regard

to futurity. He who has passed through one scene of danger and escaped, and through one time of suffering and been supported, will feel less dread in prospect of the like again. Experience is not the foundation of faith, but it is one of its buttresses. David said, "I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High." God's Word untried is sufficient ground of confidence; but it is an additional means of confidence, to be able to say, "Thy word is a tried word. I have tried it." It may not be necessary for us to keep a diary in writing, but surely we ought to keep one inscribed upon our memory; that, when new scenes of trial are opening before us, we may look over the record and learn from the past what to expect for the future. "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever," is the song with which the believer should go forth to meet every fresh affliction. His arm is not shortened that it cannot save, nor his ear heavy that it cannot hear.

As one of the most beautiful testimonies to the blessed result of affliction in the frame of mind it has produced, and the gratitude as well as submission with which a Christian that has been sanctified by it looks back upon the dark scene of woe, and afterwards gathers the peaceable fruits of righteousness, I will here introduce the language of Dr. Grandpierre, of Paris, whose house had been desolated by a fever which deprived him of his wife and some of his children. Immediately after his loss he preached a series of sermons on the subject of affliction, which have been printed and translated into English, under the title of, "Sorrow and Consolation; or, the Gospel preached under the Cross. Meditations, dedicated to the Afflicted." For true pa-

thos, and Christian sentiment, and strong consolation, I know nothing like them. Referring to his own experience, he says, "Listen, my brethren; I know a man in Christ (whose history I will not communicate) who, at a certain period of his career, by a series of important events, saw, as it were, one vast winding sheet extended over every part of his existence, enveloping the present and the future. As in the natural world, under a grey and cloudy winter sky, the weight of snow and ice pressing on it, benumbs, enchains, and seems to have annihilated, all vegetation and all sap, so was his heart, his life, all within, all without him. He thought not only that all earthly joys (by which I mean those which Christianity authorises and sanctifies) were for ever lost to him, but he thought that even his faith, which, though weak, had ever been sincere, could do no more than enable him to bear without murmur the burthen of an existence, thenceforth without interest and without enjoyment. I will not enter into more minute details, for enough has been said to enable all who are not altogether novices in the things that belong to the mind, to penetrate the depths of this misery. Well, this same man can now say, not that he experiences no more sorrow, not that he has no regrets, not that he weeps no more (you would not, you ought not, to believe him if he did;) but this he will boldly affirm, that God has so swallowed up his griefs, and tears, and heart, in the ocean of his boundless love, that he has not only resumed his interest in life, but that in some moments he asks himself if the happiness he possesses in his trial is not greater than any he has ever experienced, and if God has not blessed him more by that which he has taken away, than by that which he has given him?

"My God! I thank thee for having revealed to me the first rudiments of this science, so dark and difficult to those who have not been enlightened by thee. Instead of complaining of the stripes thou hast inflicted, I will bless thee for them. Thou hadst accorded me great blessings, Lord, before thou didst chastise me; but I acknowledge, now, that thy chastisements are, of all thy favours, the least dangerous and the most salutary. Thou art not well known but in poverty; thou art not valued, save in the destitution of all things. Thy riches, thy greatest riches, remain concealed from him who does not know the depths of his own poverty; and who can know it better than he whom thou hast deprived of all, to place him in the possession of thy riches, at the source of thy bounties? I will say, then, to the praise of thy mercy, that solitude is not only without weariness and without melancholy, but that it possesses sweet enjoyments, inexpressible delights, for the soul thou deignest to visit, with which thou condescendest to associate, and to which it pleases thee to speak of thy love, and to reveal the greatness of thy glory. I loudly proclaim, to the manifestation of thy infinite grace, that the deepest wounds the heart can receive, those which are so deep and penetrating they might be expected to bleed for ever, are so soothed by the wine and oil poured upon them by thy Divine consolations, that, in the abundance of the blessings with which thou fillest the soul, one sometimes reproaches oneself for no longer feeling painful regrets. I will declare, with thanksgiving and songs of praise, that the horizon of life can never be so obscured, so discoloured, but that the ray of thy love can enlighten, animate, and sometimes gild and embellish it. I will declare, finally,

O God of my salvation, God of my deliverance, my rock and my portion for ever, that when all other happiness fails us, that of belonging to thee, that of loving thee, of doing thy will, of devoting ourselves to thy service, that of finding all our pleasure in thee, increases so much, becomes so vast, so completely fills the capacity of the soul, that one is tempted to ask oneself, with uneasiness and culpable reproaches, if that which we possessed before, was happiness, true happiness, perfect happiness. Heretofore, O my God, thy place was usurped; thou wast obliged to make it wholly void, that thou mightest fill it! Glory be to thee, by Jesus Christ, from this time forth for ever and ever. Amen."

Faith keeps up a holy jealousy over itself, lest it should sink again into that state of lukewarmness and worldliness which would render a repetition of the visitation necessary. This is its prayer: "Shew me wherefore thou contendest with me. Surely it is meet to be said unto God, I have borne chastisement, I will not offend any more: that which I see not, teach thou me: if I have done iniquity, I will do no more." The believer realises the great fact that holiness is the end of all God's dealings with him; that it was the design of his late affliction; and therefore now watches, prays, and labours, that he may no more be in such a state as to require such corrective measures. The man who is just recovered from a dangerous illness brought on by his own imprudence, and who has been told very plainly how it was incurred, and what he must do to avoid it in future, is, if he be a wise man, very attentive to the directions of his physician as to his future habits. He remembers all he suffered, all he feared, all he promised; and is concerned never to bring himself into a

similar condition. So the Christian who sees that his affliction was sent in wise but severe love to heal some disorder of his soul, will remember the wormwood and the gall, and strive to keep his soul in future health, that the interposition of the Divine Physician may be no more necessary. Perhaps we could not have a more convincing evidence of sanctified affliction, or a richer benefit from our troubles, than a permanent recollection of the need of it when it came, and as permanent a solicitude to avoid the sin that made it necessary. The man who ten or twenty years after an affliction has passed off, looks back with adoring gratitude upon it, and says,

> "Father, I bless thy gentle hand;
> How kind was thy chastising rod
> That forc'd my conscience to a stand,
> And brought my wandering soul to God.
> Foolish and vain I went astray
> Ere I had felt thy scourges, Lord,
> I left my guide and lost my way,
> But now I love and keep thy word.
> I love thee, therefore, O my God,
> And breathe towards thy dear abode,
> Where, in thy presence fully blest,
> Thy chosen saints for ever rest."

I say that he who, years after the trial is over and past, looks back upon it with such sentiments as these, exhibits all the proofs, and enjoys all the fruits, of a sanctified affliction.

CHAPTER XII.

FAITH IN REFERENCE TO DEATH.

If the man that trembles at death be a coward; he that trifles with it is a fool. There is a thousand times more rationality in the former than in the latter. It has been very truly as well as impressively said, there is a phenomenon in the moral world well worthy of consideration inquiry and solution, the strange and fatal insensibility of men to the grand fact that they are mortal. Since it is infallibly certain that they will die, and since death is so awful an event, how does it happen that so few ever seriously think of it, or really prepare for it? No doubt something may be set down to the fact, that our Creator has in his wisdom inserted in the human mind a principle counteractive in some degree to the full influence of this prospect of death: for it would seem that so grand and awful a change in prospect, especially viewed in connection with the heaven, or hell, and eternity that are to follow it, and the uncertainty how soon it will take place, might otherwise operate with an influence altogether so overpowering as to arrest and suppress the whole business of this world. But still if it is really the case that it is necessary for death and eternity to be thus partially counteracted in their influence, yet wholly to throw off all regard to

them is the reproach, the madness, and the ruin of our race. Men wish to forget death, try to forget it, and alas succeed in producing oblivion of it but too well. Yet we can scarcely wonder at this, when we consider what their spiritual condition is, and what death is. It is the commonness of it which deprives it of its extreme awfulness. If it happened in our world only once in a century, it would be felt like the shock of an earthquake, and would hush the inhabitants of earth into a breathless silence, while the echoes of the knell of a departed soul were reverberating round the globe. It is the cessation of probation, the commencement of retribution, the moment of destiny, the seal of eternity. Its antecedents are awful, so are its accompaniments, so are its consequences. To every sense it is revolting, to every social affection agonizing, to reason perplexing, to everything but faith overwhelming. Faith and faith only can change its aspect, extract its sting, or soften its stroke: and faith can. This is faith's last battle, and its brightest triumph. Yes, it has gone on from conquering to conquer through life, and now completes the conquest by subduing its last enemy in the dark valley of the shadow of death; and then having achieved its final victory, expires like a hero on the field of conflict and of glory. Thus ends the great fight of faith. There the shout of victory is heard from the dying believer, when he catches the strain from the lips of his Lord, and quits like him the scene of contest as a conqueror, exclaiming, "It is finished."

But I must now consider what faith has to do with death. It has much, very much, to do with it.

I. It receives from the Word of God the account

of the true nature and cause of death. Here reason is all perplexity; philosophy is nonplussed; and science dumbfoundered. They see the generations of men, like those of other animals, rise flourish and decay, and are prone to resolve all, as we have seen they do human sorrows, into the mere operation of the fixed, unalterable laws of nature. Man was made to die: it is his nature and destiny. Such is not the view of the believer: he thinks more worthily of the wisdom, power, and goodness of the Creator. Man was made to live. Immortality was his birthright, and had he not sinned, would have been his undisputed and undisturbed inheritance. He was placed under a law of which the penalty was death: he broke it, and he died. Death is man's own work, rather than God's. "Sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." It was by sin that death was conceived: and therefore the offspring is horrid as its mother. This invests it with additional terror, since the decay is less terrific as a natural process than as the infliction of a sentence. Hence Christians who deem it such have a more awful sense of dying than the hardened sceptic, for while he considers it merely as the order of unintelligent nature, they see in it the retribution of offended justice. The tendency of atheism is to harden the heart into absolute insensibility, and to eradicate from the soul all those finer and juster principles which render it susceptible to emotions of sublimity in the contemplation of eternity. The atheist has first degraded himself by his view of his mortality to the level of a brute, and now contemplates his approaching end with almost as little emotion as any of his fellow-brutes. He has steeled his heart against all those

feelings of awe, anxiety, and holy fear with which the believer anticipates the disclosures of eternity; and therefore, though a stranger to the consoling power of a believer's hopes, has blotted from his nature the salutary influence of a believer's fears. It is the Christian only who has a due appreciation of what it is that makes death either terrible in one view, or joyful in another, and this makes the triumph of his faith over it the more illustrious. He recognises the subjugation of death by the work of Christ. Among the enemies over whom Jesus triumphed openly upon the cross was death. It was then he abolished it, and "destroyed him that hath the power of death, that is the devil; and delivered them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." Satan is said to have the power of death, not because he has or ever had any absolute or sovereign power over it, or authority to inflict it at his will. No: the keys of death are in the hand of Christ, and are never trusted out of them: but this power is ascribed to him because he tempted our first parents, and by his lies brought them and all their race under the doom of mortality. His object was to destroy them. He was aware of the penalty with which the law of Paradise was guarded; and he imagined if he could get them to break that, it would be all over with them, and that either annihilation of the guilty pair would follow, or their eternal punishment and that of their race. But the Son of God, who was "manifested to destroy the works of the devil," frustrated this design by assuming human nature; and, in that part of his nature which was capable of death; endured it for men's guilt; and thus rendered it possible for them to escape eternal death, procured them acceptance

with God, and a restoration from the grave by a glorious resurrection to the enjoyment of eternal life in heaven. Thus did Jesus Christ "overcome the sharpness of death, and open the kingdom of heaven to all believers." Death is therefore "abolished," not that it is set aside even in the case of believers, they must die as well as others; but by the pardon of that sin which gave death its sting, the sting is plucked out, and though it remains dreadful in prospect, it is harmless in reality. Thus by the promise and prospect of eternal life, and of the resurrection of the body, the very nature of death is changed; and that which without the work of Christ would have been immense, eternal, and irreparable loss, is now infinite gain. This is the blessed truth which, upon the testimony of God in his Word, the believer receives; and thus, by a faith and hope full of immortality, overcomes the last enemy.

Faith is assured of the Divine interposition as regards all the circumstances of death, as to time, place, and manner. We are informed by the Word of God that these are all under the appointment, or permission and wise direction, of God's over-ruling Providence. There is chance in nothing that concerns us or happens to us during our pilgrimage upon earth; how much less in that event which closes life. Even a sparrow falls not to the ground without the knowledge of our heavenly Father; how much less an immortal man. The hour of every man's death is as certainly fixed as the day of judgment: God as much concerns himself about him as if he were the only object of his care. It is true that to all appearance the death of a man is as casual and undetermined as the fall of a leaf in a forest; but it is not so. There is a time to die, a fixed time, an unalter-

able time, and each man is immortal till his time comes. "Is there not an appointed time to man upon earth? Are not his days also like the days of an hireling?" "Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months are with thee, thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass." This fact is declared not to make us indolent or rashly adventurous; not to take us off from the proper means for preserving our lives; but to deliver us from all undue solicitude about death. How soothing is the idea that infinite wisdom has fixed the time, and that it must be the best time! How calmly and confidently may we go forward amidst the dangers and difficulties of our present situation, remembering there is one who has fixed the hour of our departure, whose eye is ever on his own Divine time-piece, waiting and watching for the moment he himself has fixed to arrive, and extending his arm over us to guard us till then! What power can crush us till he gives the signal, and what skill can preserve us when he determines our decease? Who should fear that he shall die before God calls him to depart, and who would wish to live one moment longer than God sees fit that he should continue? Many have been comforted by this even amidst the carnage and slaughter of the battle field. "Every bullet has its commission," they have exclaimed, "and I am invulnerable to them all till God sends one to strike me." So in the time of pestilence, the same faith has said to its possessor, "Go, and return, secure from death, till God shall call thee home." As with the time so with the place; that, too, is fixed, whether at home or abroad; on the railway, at sea, or in the chamber. So also the manner, whether suddenly or slowly; whether by accident or disease. All is of God;

all in the plan of Providence. Oh most consoling thought! There is an infinite mind that with marvellous condescension has arranged all these matters for us beforehand. Omniscient wisdom, at the impulse of infinite love, has laid down for itself the plan of mercy, and will suffer nothing to counteract its working. Scoffing scepticism and proud philosophy may laugh at the idea of the Infinite God descending to such trifles; but it is for the glory of his love to be willing to do it, and equally for the glory of his wisdom and power to be able to do it. What a view does it give us of his greatness, to think of him as creating the world, and also appointing the time, the place, and the manner in which each individual shall die! There are some who are ever speculating, fearing, or hoping, about the circumstances of their death. One dreads this kind of death, and another dreads that. One deprecates a sudden death, and another a slow one. Faith leaves it all to God, and submits to his wisdom the appointment of the death by which we shall most glorify Him.

Then this great principle delivers the believer from the immoderate fear of death. It was one end of the Saviour's death, "To deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." The reference here is to the Jews, who, in consequence of the comparatively dim light which in their case was shed upon the subject of immortality, were in great and constant dread of dissolution. Our situation is delightfully different from theirs. Through the rent veil we see more clearly into the holy of holies, and thus learn to rise above that excessive fear of death which characterised those ancient believers. True it is there is a natural fear of death common to humanity, and neces-

sary to self-preservation. For who would care to perpetuate an existence which had nothing to render it desirable beyond existence itself? How many would throw off life as an intolerable burden, but for the inherent dread of its termination by death! This natural dread of dissolution is in some cases much increased by a constitutional and morbid tendency to look at every thing through a darkened medium, to anticipate imaginary evils, and to magnify such as are real. In very many cases, however, we may perhaps say in most, the fear of death arises from a low state of religion and weakness of faith. Were the mind of the Christian more employed in the contemplation of celestial objects; did he habituate himself to meditate upon the partially revealed glory; did he oftener rise above the world to the mount of Pisgah, and look by faith over the promised land; did he possess more of that faith which is the conviction of things hoped for, the confidence of things not seen; did he, instead of limiting his view to the dark boundary line of the grave, cast his eye over it into the realms of light, and life, and immortality, how would his fears of the dying hour abate! It is remarkable how little the writers of the New Testament say about death compared with what they do about heavenly glory. It would seem as if they scarcely saw it, and as if to them it were lost amidst the blaze of the celestial splendour, and appeared only like a dark spot floating upon the disc of a heavenly luminary. A more familiar acquaintance by the power of faith with the many mansions in his Father's house which the Saviour is gone to prepare, would raise us above the dread of the dark avenue that leads to them.

As the fear of death, in many, perhaps in most, cases,

arises rom the love of life, the best way to destroy the effect is of course to remove the cause. The immoderate dread of quitting the world is the dark shadow of the immoderate love of the world passing over the soul. We dread extremely to part from a beloved object. But what is this world that we should be so unwilling to leave it? It is as regards its natural scenery, a beautiful world; but is it not under a curse withal for man's sin; do we not see proofs everywhere that sin, the mighty spoiler, has been there, and left its foul foot-prints behind? Is it because of the pleasures of sense and appetite you are unwilling to depart? What! Is there any thing in having the flesh indulged and pleased, the sense gratified, the fancy amused, so important as for you to be reluctant to give it up? What can you find in meats, drinks, and dress, in full barns and coffers, in vulgar fame and applause, so great, so good, so worthy of an immortal spirit, that it should make them so attractive? Are you desirous to live for these things? Is it not a low and worthless spirit that had rather be so employed than see your Maker's face; that chooses thus to entertain itself on earth rather than partake of the effusions of divine glory above; that had rather creep with worms than soar with angels; that prefers to associate with the brutes than with the spirits of just men made perfect?

Then think of all the pains of body to be endured in the world, which so often make us groan in this tabernacle, being burdened. Is it to drag about that poor, infirm, and diseased body you would remain, that hospital of disease, and thus hold fellowship with all the ills that flesh is heir to? Or if you have bodily health, what fears, cares, anxieties, oppress the mind!

Are there not thoughts continually disturbing us, which leave a deeper sting than even disease? What bitter disappointments, what corroding solicitudes, what aching hearts, what gloomy forebodings, enter into our mental history! Is it these we so love that we are unwilling to lay down the load? "Ah, but our friends!" Well, are these all and always to us what we could wish or desire? Is there no frustration of the hope we place in them, no ingratitude, inconstancy, unkindness, sharper than a serpent's tooth, from them? How rare is perfect friendship and an unmixed affection! Your possessions perhaps draw your hearts to earth; you do not like to part with houses, lands, money. Poor, sordid, terrene soul, to find more on earth to attract, than there is in heaven!

But look at the world in another aspect, as the scene of man's apostacy, the region of sin, the territory of Satan, or at least that which he claims as the god of this world. Are you a Christian? Then you must be aware of the contractedness of your knowledge, the darkness of your mind, your uninfluential apprehensions of spiritual and eternal things, your incoherent, shattered thoughts of Divine truth. You must know how imperfect is your sanctification, how strong your corruptions, how slow your mortification to the world, how ineffectual your resistance of temptation. You cannot be ignorant of the sorrows, the complaints, the dejection, the doubts, the fears, and the despondency, which these things occasion. Are there not times when the apostle's language seems to suit you, "O, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death?" Is this a state from which you should be unwilling to go away? And then extending our views beyond ourselves

to the world around us, do we not see on every hand the reign of sorrow as the result of the reign of sin? What tears flow in our path, what groans enter into our ears! What a mass of misery do we behold beyond our power to relieve it! How often do we feel a wish we could go where we could escape the sights and sounds of wretchedness which infest our path, and which by sympathy entail misery upon ourselves! What, reluctant to leave this, and go where all tears are wiped from our eyes? Nor is it the sorrows of humanity only, or chiefly, that afflict the Christian, but its sins. O the aboundings of iniquity, the overflowings of ungodliness, the infidelity, immorality, heresy, and Popery, which are to be found here; and the idolatry and Mahomedanism abroad! O the sight of a world where Satan reigns and sin covers the earth; where tyranny, slavery, oppression, and injustice trample upon the rights of humanity, and man becomes a wild beast, a fiend, to man! How can we love such a world, polluted as it is by crime, resounding with misery, stained with the blood of millions of martyrs; the walk of devils; the slaughter-house of the saints; the scene of the ruin of countless hosts of immortal souls; the spot where Christ was murdered; and where God is perpetually insulted? What a reproach is it to our love to God, to holiness, to heaven, that we should be unwilling to die and depart from such a scene as this!

And what do you mean by your unwillingness to die? Is it that you are not willing to die now, or that you are not willing to die at all? Is it the thing itself you dislike, or only the time of it? If merely the time, you may be sure that you will be just as unwilling at any future time as now. When would you die? How long would

you live? Be assured that the longer you live, the more earthly you will grow in such a frame of mind as this. So that it is evident it is the thing itself, and not the time you dislike and would put off. You reverse Job's expression, and say of death what he did of life, "I loathe it, and would live always." What! wish ever to be kept out of heaven; wish to be eternally united to a clod of earth; wish to subvert the laws of nature and overturn the constitutions of heaven, that you may remain perpetually upon earth! Wish to live for ever away from your Father in heaven, and an exile from his home above! Can this comport with a supreme love to God and a conversation in heaven? *

Subdue then your love of life by a frequent meditation on these things. As Johnson said to Garrick, when the latter was displaying to him his beautiful house and gardens at Hampton Court, "Ah David, these are the things that make a death-bed terrible." Conquer the love of the world by looking not at its beauties, but at its deformities: by dwelling not on its comforts, but on its crimes; not by perpetually taking your fill of enjoyment at its purest springs, but by tasting its bitter waters. It is your love of life that makes you unwilling to die. Wean yourself from it. Die daily, as the apostle did, in anticipation, and the dread reality will not, when it comes, terrify you. Familiarize yourself with the shape mien and step of the monster, and it will soon cease to seem monstrous. Turn not away from death with horror and affright, as children and timid women do from fancied spectral forms; but look it in the face, and examine it, and you

* See the last chapter of that glorious Treatise, "Howe's Blessedness of the Righteous."

will cease to dread it. We ought not to acquire an infidel indifference, a paganish stupidity, a brutal insensibility, or such a hardness of heart as leads by the loss of all sense of the value of life, to an utter recklessness about death. I desire no such disposition as this, but a state of mind in which a deep and somewhat awful sense of the solemnity of dying, is moderated by a hope full of immortality. The true frame of mind is, an entire willingness to die or live as God shall see fit, accompanied with a leaning, so far as we ourselves are concerned, towards death, not to get rid of trouble, or find in the grave a sanctuary for sorrow, but from a desire to be with Christ, and to attain to the perfection of our nature.

Still I concede that there is a natural fear of death, which even faith does not totally subdue and eradicate. Mr. Jay beautifully compares it, as I have elsewhere observed, to the dread of the sea felt by a person who is separated from his family by it. He longs to be with them, but still he is afraid to cross the great boisterous gulf betwixt him and them. A believer loves his Saviour, and thinks with delight of being for ever with him; but he must die to reach him, and he does still think with some degree of dismay of the dark valley through which he must pass to reach him. Sometimes it is a trouble, or at any rate a solicitude, to him, to consider how he shall conduct himself in the awful hour of his conflict with the last enemy. Often he turns an anxious eye to that scene when he shall feel himself, and be seen by others, confronted by the King of Terrors, and in earnestness and trembling, not however unmixed with faith and hope, he prays, "When I tread the verge of Jordan bid my anxious fears subside." And generally the prayer is answered. It is the part

of faith, to expect God's promise to be fulfilled, and his presence to be granted, in that awful hour. This is its language, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." *

Even the timid believer may and should believe in Christ in reference to his death, for Christ has promised to come and meet him. "In my Father's house are many mansions: I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself." Wonderful language! Mysterious condescension! It is like one friend saying to another upon the road, "I will go and

* This passage from the twenty-third Psalm, though quoted above according to the usual meaning attached to it, does not really refer to death. A reflecting reader will observe that David does not speak of the valley of death, but only of the valley of the shadow of death The reference is to danger and trouble, so great as to be the very shadow of death itself. The expression is to be interpreted by the subject of which it is a part. David intended to say, in continuance of the beautiful pastoral imagery of the Psalm, that as a sheep when it wanders through deep ravines and dark valleys, is secured against the assaults of wild beasts and other dangers, by the presence of its shepherd with his rod and staff; so he, as often as he was in a situation of danger, had a sufficient protection in the shepherd care of God.

Another passage, which occurs in the hundred and sixteenth Psalm, is often misapplied by ordinary readers. It is there said, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." This is usually understood to mean that the Lord is especially present to his dying saints, and causes his consolations peculiarly to abound at that season of their trial. But the true meaning, as the context and tenor of the whole Psalm proves, is that the Lord watches over the lives of his saints, and guards them from death. David had experienced this in a dangerous disease by which he had been brought nigh to death, but from which he had been delivered by God's providence, and it was to celebrate this deliverance this Psalm was written. It is of rescue from death, and not of consolation in it, that he speaks.

get all ready for your reception: and when all is complete, I will come and meet you and introduce you." Will not this dismiss your fears? What need you fear, if Jesus be with you? And he has promised it. His glory will throw a radiance over the dark form of death itself; and in his presence the last enemy will be transformed into an angel of light. I am persuaded from long observation, that there is nothing about which the true Christian has less need to be anxious than his dying hour. If his God has promised to make his bed in his sickness, how much more will he make his bed for his death.

II. There is also faith in death, as well as faith in reference to it before it comes.

It is said of the patriarchs by the apostle, "These all died in faith;" an expression which in their case had reference to their belief in God's promise of the land of Canaan, which they were assured would be inherited by their descendants, though they themselves possessed not a foot of it. But their belief was not of this merely, for it is said they "desired a better country, that is a heavenly;" and in the expectation of this they met the last enemy. Nor is it their privilege only, thus to pass through the dark portals of the tomb, but also that of all true believers.

Faith brings the believer into a certain state, an habitual and permanent condition. From a criminal and an enemy to God, it makes him his friend, yea, his child. He is then accepted by God into an everlasting relationship to him for life, for death, and for eternity. So that he does not depend for his safety upon any actual exercise of faith in the hour and article of his departure. He may die by accident, or may be sud-

denly smitten down by apoplexy, or some other disease which extinguishes life in a moment, and have no opportunity for any exercise of his mind: or his sun may set with his intellect under a cloud of morbid melancholy, like the poet Cowper; but he is still in a state of faith, and is as safe as though he died in the very triumph of actual faith. Indeed, there have been instances in which Christians of undoubted piety have died by their own hands in fits of insanity. They were in a state of faith, though from a disordered brain, they were unable to exercise it. The luminary was there, though it had undergone a total eclipse. Hence the necessity of coming into this state in health, by a cordial reception of the Gospel, and an entire change of heart through the power of the Spirit of God. But dying in faith means also, in the case of those who are of sound mind and have the unfettered use of their intellectual powers, the actual exercise of belief in God's truth at the time, a continuance to the end, according to the words of the apostle: "We are made partakers of Christ if we hold fast the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end." "We are not of them who draw back to perdition; but of them who believe to the saving of the soul." They are faithful unto death; and are believing in death; and blessed is the privilege of believing then. Never do we more need it than in the great conflict with our last enemy. Then, when our heart-strings are breaking, and our friends weeping, and the world receding, and eternity opening to us, what can be of the smallest service to us but this? We are then literally shut up to faith. And what we need is generally granted. Those who have gone all their days feeble and desponding are often mighty then. It is

wonderful and delightful to see how God strengthens the confidence of his doubting children, when he is about to remove them to himself. Their faith, which has been only as a spark amidst much smoke, of gloom doubts and fears, blazes out then into a bright and cloudless flame. God seems to have reserved some of his richest cordials of assurance till that season; and they who had gone mourning here below, and often wet their couch with tears, have departed, as is fabled of the swan, with a song of soft and heavenly music. What scenes, transcending all that poetry describes or fiction imagines, are to be witnessed in the chambers of dying saints! How often has it seemed as if the veil were drawn aside, and the scenes of the celestial world were actually visible to the eye of sense; so that some have gone so far as to suppose it possible that visions of the heavenly state have been granted to those who at the time were treading upon its threshold. I should rather conclude, however, that these are only the realizing apprehensions of that faith which then, beyond what it ever has done before, penetrates the veil of mortality, and roams abroad amidst the realms of celestial glory. But how does the faith of the dying Christian exercise itself then? Merely by as simple a reliance as ever on Christ for salvation: and never is the reliance of the Christian more simple than in that moment when his soul is about to appear in the presence of a holy God. Then the mind looking back upon the past is more deeply sensible than ever of its sins, corruptions, and imperfections. Instead of feeling any disposition to depend with pride or complacency upon the longest life and the greatest measure of service, it never renounced all confidence of this kind with such

emphatic detestation as it then does. The last lingering remains of self-righteousness then depart, and the believer with a new depth of humility exclaims,

"Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to thy cross I cling."

Belief exercises itself in death by expecting the presence of our Divine Lord, according to his promise. "Has he not," says the Christian, "engaged to be with me? Is he not with me? Do I not feel him near? What means this holy calm which has arisen in my breast? How is it I am so peaceful, when I once feared I should be so anxious and agitated? Is it not the presence of my Lord? Can I doubt that he is upholding me? Was I not always tremulous, timid, and doubting? And lo! I am now serene, hopeful, and even cheerful! I am in the gloomy pass, and yet it is not dark. Surely Jesus is near, and it must be the light of his countenance which irradiates the scene."

The believer resigns his soul into the hands of Christ for the hour of departure, for the awful transition, for the passage to eternity. The death of the godly is not a mere passive state of mind, but an active one. They do not die violently as it were, or by mere force of necessity. Beasts when they die, yield to force; and so do wicked men who are "driven away in their wickedness," torn out of life by a wrench: but it is not so with the Christian, when his faith is truly in exercise. He may, as I have remarked, have some natural fear of death; yet when he sees it is the will of God that he should depart, even this leaves him, and he resigns himself up to the Divine command. He dismisses himself. In what soft terms does the Scripture speak

of the death of saints: it is a dissolution, not a violent tearing to pieces. "Having a desire to depart (to be dissolved) and to be with Christ." It is a sleep. "Them that sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." So that dying is to a Christian settling himself to sleep; a sweet and gentle action, not merely passively yielding himself up to irresistible power. Hence the primitive Christians called their grave-yards the koimeterion, or sleeping-place; a Greek term from which our English word "cemetery" is derived. "Into thy hands, O Jesus, I commit my spirit, for thou hast redeemed me." This is the language of the dying believer. He is about to plunge into the abyss of eternity; and he can do so, for he confides his soul to him who has invited, encouraged, and even commanded, him to trust him with it. He does not stand lingering and shivering on the brink, and trembling to lose his hold; but launches into the deep with confidence of safety. His soul is sustained by a hope full of immortality. The pulse of his life is feeble and fluttering, and each stroke of his heart seems as if it would be the last; but his expectation of eternal life becomes each moment stronger as his soul draws nearer and nearer to the region in which there is no more death. Through the darkness which intervenes he sees the lights in his Father's house, and they are close at hand; and the beams are beautifully reflected from the dark waters of Jordan's intervening stream. All is now reality. "I know," he says, "that if the earthly house of this tabernacle be dissolved, I have a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Mortality will soon be swallowed up of life."

Nor is his poor frail body left out in the meditations

of the dying Christian. There is a testimony from God in the Bible concerning that too; revelation has by the doctrine of the resurrection, broken the silence and irradiated the shades of the sepulchre. It has left us in no doubt concerning the future history of the meaner and mortal part of our nature. The secrets of the grave are divulged. The body, whatever mystery envelopes the subject of its identity, will be raised. Such is the hope of him who has learnt his religion from the Bible. Many a dreary hour of sickness and pain, during the nights of sickness and months of vanity appointed to him, is rendered tolerable, if not comfortable, by the words of the apostle, "From whence we look for the coming of the Saviour, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself." With this hope he watches the progress of his disease; feels his frame growing weaker and weaker; endures racking pain; is conscious oftentimes of much that is loathsome and annoying to others, till at length he longs to throw off the burden of the flesh, exulting in the words of Job, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth. And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." And cheering his heart with the beautiful assurance of that wonderful chapter which will be read at his funeral, and with which he often anticipates his own obsequies, "It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body:" he exclaims, "Take thy

victim, O death! I calmly and willingly surrender this poor, diseased, emaciated body to thy arrest. But rejoice not against me, O mine enemy; for though I fall, I shall arise."

"Corruption, earth, and worms
Shall but refine this flesh,
Till my triumphant spirit comes
To put it on afresh.
God my Redeemer lives,
And often from the skies
Looks down and watches all my dust,
Till he shall bid it rise."

Faith's work in death is not yet complete, for it has to be exercised in reference to survivors. The dying husband and father feels that much of the bitterness of death consists in separation from those loved ones who stand weeping around his bed, especially when leaving them with slender or no provision for their support. "I die, but God lives," he says to them; "I am departing from you, but he remains with you. I have now nothing to comfort myself or you with but his promises; and has he not said, 'A Judge of the fatherless and widows is God in his holy habitation:' 'Leave thy fatherless children with me, and let thy widows trust in God?' I believe him, and can trust you to his providential care and covenant engagements. I have nothing to leave you but his promise, and with that I can leave you in hope and in comfort. I can do nothing for you any longer but pray for you and believe for you; and having done this, painful as it is for me to be separated from you, I go to my grave with confidence for you and in peace for myself." What faith does it require in a mother leaving a large family,

perhaps in perilous circumstances, without knowing into whose hands they may fall, to believe that they will be taken care of! And oh! the still stronger confidence in God needed by a widow, to cherish a hope that on her decease her orphan family will find friends; and to believe that when father and mother have forsaken them, the Lord will take them up. The dying pastor also, who during his decline was so anxious and sometimes so distrustful concerning his church, now loses all his fears and solicitude, and cherishes the faith and feelings of Dr. Owen, who on his death-bed said, "I am leaving the ship of the church in a storm, but what is the loss of a poor under-rower, while the Divine Pilot is himself on board." This is faith truly, not in words only, but in truth, to commit such objects of affection into the hands of God, and to be comforted by a cheerful expectation that he will take care of them.

This then is the exercise of this grace in reference to death.

We cannot reach heaven unless we persevere in our belief of God's truth to the end of life. It becomes us for our caution to ponder the words of the prophet: "When the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned." And it is well at the same time to remember for our comfort the declaration of the apostle, "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." And it is only amidst the salutary fear and trembling produced by the former

passage, that the comfort of the latter can be, or ought to be enjoyed. Perseverance to the end is matter of God's promise, and therefore should be matter of man's belief: but it is attained by means, and these are holy fear care and watchfulness. As Elisha would not leave his master till he was taken up into heaven; so faith must not, will not, leave us, till our ascension comes. We see many, who appeared to have true religion in life, losing it by the way, and arriving at death without it. Supposed religion in past life, if it has passed away, will not do to rest upon in death. We cannot die in safety, if we do not die as well as live in the belief of God's Word.

While those who live in faith should also seek to die in faith; those who would die in faith must live in faith. So did the patriarchs, and so must we. Men generally die as they live. We had need make trial of the faith we would die by. It is the most perilous thing in the world to trust for our religion to the last hours of life. Death-bed repentances are little to be depended upon. The Scripture contains the history of four thousand years, and there is but one instance, the thief on the cross, of a sinner's being a true penitent in death. And there were special reasons for that. It was the first-fruits of Christ's death and merits, at the very time when the great oblation was being made. It was the first proof of the magnetic power of the cross. No such season ever did occur, or ever can again; therefore no encouragement can be derived from it for any other case; for Christ was then performing his great redeeming work, and it seemed meet it should be signalised by some extraordinary act of grace. Surely we should not

have to seek our weapons, or the way to use them, when we are in front of the foe, and need them for use. Even professing Christians should be much concerned to provide a dying faith for a dying hour. Dr. Manton has well said, in the quaint language of his day, "We had need to get promises ready, evidences ready, and experiences ready, against a dying hour." By which he meant, that in life we should be intelligently, habitually, and practically acquainted with our Bibles; that we should read much, meditate much, and apply much, the promises of Scripture; that there should be especially a very intimate acquaintance with those parts of Scripture which relate to death and heaven. This is getting the promises ready. As to evidences, he meant that there should be all those states of mind and habits of life, in respect of holiness of conduct, spirituality of affections, and the work of the Spirit, which are the fruits of faith and the proofs of its existence, and are so necessary in a dying hour to assure us that all is right. It is a fearful thing to come to a death-bed, as many do, with a religion so feeble as to leave the poor trembling soul in dreadful doubt as to its state. And experiences mean, that habitual living upon the power, wisdom, faithfulness, and love of God, which will enable us not only to rely upon him with peace and comfort in our last and closing scene, but also help us then to bear testimony to others of his glorious perfections and covenant mercies. How encouraging is it to survivors to hear such a testimony, how comforting to the dying saint to bear it! Many have become preachers in death, who never aspired to the office in life; their death-bed became a pulpit, and their dying

experience was more powerful than the most impressive eloquence. Then let us get promises ready, evidences ready, and experiences ready, for our dying hour. We should have many more beautiful instances of faith in death, had we more instances of strong and influential faith in life.

CHAPTER XIII.

FAITH IN REFERENCE TO HEAVEN.

THERE are three questions which every considerate man will propose to himself in reference to his present state of being. What am I? Whence did I come? What is my business here? And there are three more which he cannot help sometimes asking concerning the future. Where, what, how, shall I be when I go hence? There, before us, at no great distance, is the grave, into the awful and mysterious obscurity of which, neither sense nor reason can dart one illuminating ray; nor can either of them extort from its sullen silence one whisper of information. Oh, the dreadful future! Into what will the one first step from the stage of existence plunge us? To reason, it is unbounded, unvaried, rayless, midnight darkness, without one luminous point, through infinite space. What shall we be? How soon it is asked! And who can reply? Think how profoundly this question, this mystery, concerns us, and what in comparison with it all questions in all sciences are to us, all researches into the constitution and laws of material nature, all investigation into the history of past ages, the future career of events, the progress of states and empires, and even the thought, what will become of this globe itself, or all the mundane system?

What, where, we shall be ourselves, is the matter of surpassing, infinite interest to us. There is in the contemplation a magnitude and solemnity, which transcend and overwhelm our utmost faculty of thought. But where shall we gain information about this mysterious future? All men, except a few tribes of the lowest savages, have desired immortality. Man is in existence, loves life, and covets its perpetual continuance; he cannot endure the thought of throwing it off, and wants to know whether he shall die out at last, or live for ever. He is a creature capable of happiness or misery, and tasting much of both on earth, is anxious to know which, or whether either, will be his lot beyond the grave. He is conscious of sin, and feels solicitous to be informed whether the consequences of transgression will pursue him into an invisible state. He is capable of indefinite growth in intelligence, virtue, bliss; and he would be informed if he is to be cut off in the infancy of his being, his faculties, and his acquisitions, or is to enter upon an endless career of improvement. How is he to be satisfied on these momentous points? The world by wisdom knew not God, or immortality, or heaven. Reason, I repeat, never did, never can, assure us that there is a future state at all. If it could ascertain that, it could not tell us the duration of that futurity. If that could be proved, and it were certain that there is to be everlasting consciousness, it would be at a loss to tell us whether the future state will be one of unmixed bliss, or misery, or a mixture of both. This ascertained, it would still be unable to inform us how happiness is to be secured, and misery avoided, through our eternity of being. And even if all this were demonstrated, it could not tell us whether immor-

tality were a gift bestowed only on the nobler spirits of our race, or were the common endowment of humanity. It fails at every step. Neither Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, or Cicero, could settle these questions. These sages uttered their speculations and hopes, accompanied with gloomy doubts and fearful misgivings. "The earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God." The whole heathen world "groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now:" longing for immortality to relieve them from the burden of their sufferings, their cares, and their labours. A striking fact, recorded by Venerable Bede in his history, is in point. When Edwin, the king of the country beyond the Humber, embraced Christianity, he convoked the heads of his nation and laid before the assembly the motive of his change of religion, and asked them what they thought of the new doctrine. After others had given their opinion, a chief rose and spoke in these words, (they are translated from King Alfred's version):

"The present life of man upon earth, O King! seems to me, in comparison of that time which is unknown to us, like to the swift flight of a sparrow through the room wherein you sit at supper in winter with your ealdermen and thanes, a good fire having been lit in the midst, and the room made warm thereby, whilst storms of wind and rain rage outside; the sparrow flying in at one door and out at another, whilst he is within, is safe from the wintry storm; but after a short time of comfort, soon passed, he vanishes out of your sight into the dark winter from which he came. So this life of man appears for a short space; but of what went before, and what is to follow, we are utterly ignorant. If, there-

fore, this new doctrine contains something more certain, it seems justly to deserve to be followed."

Such was the picturesque confession of Paganism. The soul of man, apart from the discovery made to us by the revelation of God, seems like this sparrow, to flit from darkness across the abodes of the living in this world into darkness again, and to wander, nobody knows where, without shelter, in the regions of wintry storms, snows, and hurricanes. What oracle then is to settle this tremendous question, and to tell us what, where, and how, we shall be when we go hence? What is to relieve the conscious heart, brooding in awful silence over the darkness of the sepulchre? Hearken to the music, the heavenly music of those thrilling words, "But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." What are all the volumes which philosophy ever wrote, compared to this golden sentence! By the cross of Christ, the dark screen that intercepted our view, and hid the realms of glory from our sight, is rent asunder, and the vista of heaven and eternal ages is laid open to the eye of faith. Immortality, seen only as a dim object of hope, amidst the midnight darkness of Paganism, and only as a dim object of faith amidst the twilight of Judaism, is beheld amidst the noontide splendour of Christianity in its magnitude and grandeur, as at once the object of strong and steady faith and lively and saving hope.

The immortality of the soul, the resurrection of the body, and a future state of rewards and punishment beyond the grave, are all matters of revelation also. I do not say there are no presumptive evidences, or rather

I should say, suggestions of them, apart from revelation; but they are only suggestions, which never did, and never could satisfy any anxious mind. Immortality itself is so vast, so wondrous a thing, as to seem applicable, when we come to reflect upon it, only to the Great Eternal himself. To conceive that I, or any human being, born after the manner of the brute creation, and like them sustained by the earth, a poor, frail, feeble creature of yesterday, and crushed before the moth, who, after a few fleeting years at most, shall return to the earth from which I sprang, and shall seem to be utterly blotted out from existence, shall continue to be, in some mode, and in some scene of existence, for millions of ages, and that they will be as nothing in comparison with what will follow them! That a duration, passing all reach of the stupendous power of numbers, will be as nothing; and that after it I shall still be myself, the very same being! And that very manner of being will be specific, with full consciousness of what death will be; an internal world of thought and emotion, and a perfect sense of my relations to the system in which I shall find myself placed: and a continual succession of distinct sentiments and experiences, and the constant certainty of the train going on for ever! How utterly surpassing is this to reason, how almost incredible to faith, when this wondrous, all but deified man, is contrasted with the present little, insignificant, ephemeral creature, who flutters out his tiny being in this material, and compared with the universe, little world! And this immortality to be the endowment, the destiny of all that swarm of ignorant, debased, and in appearance utterly insignificant useless creatures, which peoples our earth! Could anything short of a Divine

revelation establish such a fact? Could any thing short of God's testimony lead me to embrace it? Not that there is anything in it contrary to reason; no, but something so vast, so wondrous, so magnificent, that reason never could have concluded that this gift, so rich, so splendid, so extraordinary, could be bestowed on the child of dust, the heir of mortality. And does not even faith, I say again, sometimes recoil from it as the greatest improbability? Nothing short of all those irrefutable evidences which accredit the mission of the Son of God, could ever make me believe that I am the wondrous being which immortality makes me. To believe this in reality, this is faith, strong faith, mighty faith. The great mass even in this Christian land, even of those who frequent our sanctuaries, do not believe it. Their conduct is utterly at variance with such a belief. Is the impress of immortality upon their character? Is there any thing in their conduct that bears the least resemblance to the mighty idea? Are they not infinitely more swayed by the present time, than the future eternity? Has not earth infinitely greater attractions for them than heaven? Is not all their labour bestowed upon the present, while the endless future is neglected and forgotten? No! no! Immortality is not believed by the multitude. It is a mere name, an opinion, a speculation; any thing but a deep practical conviction.

Still God has testified it. There, in characters radiant with the light of heaven; there, written as with the beams of the Sun of Righteousness upon the page of inspiration, is the mighty word, immortality, the gift of God, the hope of a dying world, the portion of the righteous. The mind even of the omniscient God

himself never conceived anything greater; and his words, which are not as our words, never expressed anything nobler than that matchless sentence, "To them who by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, honour, immortality, eternal life." O, most precious volume, if only for this one verse! I can never come to it without stopping to gaze, to wonder, and adore. Glory, honour, immortality, eternal life, what subjects of thought! Compared with their brightness the sun at noon is dark; with their grandeur, the ocean is insignificant; with their beauty, the choicest scenes of nature are dull. How have heroes panted for glory; the ambitious for honour; the living for remission from death; and the dying for life! Here are all these in their full significance, divested of the shadow and falsities with which pretence and illusion have invested them; in their purity, divested of everything that ignorance and falsehood have attached to them; in their perfection, comprehending all that in the Word of God belongs to them. Philosophers, orators, poets, historians, I say to you all, find me if you can, quote for me if it be possible, from the whole range of human literature, a sentence so weighty in terms, so lofty in subject, so worthy of God to utter or man to hear, as this which fell from the pen of the blessed apostle. It would seem as if, when he wrote that wonderful sentence, he had in view the whole race of aspirants after distinction; all who in any age and any country have lifted their heads above their fellows; and looking round with exploring eye, have sought to find some adequate and permanent good for their souls; as if he saw their eager hope, their laborious pursuit, their panting bosoms, after what they thought to be

glory, honour, and immortality; and knowing how they were deceived, said to them, "Here it is, revealed by the gospel, and proposed to all who live according to its precepts."

But it is time, after this long introduction, to dwell upon the subject of this chapter, which is, Faith in reference to heaven. It believes too in hell. Yes: it credits all those dark threatenings, those terrific descriptions of punishment that will come upon the wicked. It stands sometimes, not that it loves to do so, but because God requires it, upon the borders of the flaming pit, to hear the groans of the lost, and see the smoke of their torment ascend up for ever and ever. Perfect love casteth out a servile, but not a filial, fear. There are seasons when even contemplation of the place of punishment may be salutary to a child of God. Hope and fear are the two scales in the soul of the Christian which regulate each other, as one sinks, the other rises: and faith holds and adjusts the balance. And if we sink into a frame in which the objects which appeal to our hope are but feebly influential, it is well that we should be roused by others addressing themselves to our fears. The awe produced on the soul of the believer by the representation of the miseries of the lost, is salutary and even necessary. And it has been conjectured by some, that as the continued and certain security of saints in glory will be effected by moral means, the contemplation of divine justice as it appears in the eternal punishment of the wicked, will be among the things which will accomplish the eternal conservation of the righteous in heaven. But we have now to do with heaven: and the following are the exercises of the believer's mind in reference to it.

1. He credits its certainty. It is an assured fact that there is a heaven, a state of ineffable bliss, beyond the grave, for the righteous. He holds it not as a mere opinion, a speculation, a something that reason renders probable, but believes it as that which revelation makes certain. It is one of the chief subjects of the New Testament. Though of necessity invisible, it is in his view a grand reality. True he has sometimes his gloomy seasons, when the world unseen and unknown appears to him uncertain. Doubts, fears, difficulties, and objections rise up before him, or are injected into his mind like so many fiery darts of the wicked one. Distressing at times are the conflicts between his reason and his faith, bitter his feelings, agonizing his state. This is what Bunyan calls the Dark Valley of the Shadow of Death. It is however only for awhile. He takes up the shield of faith, and receives upon it the burning missiles and quenches them all. He lays hold of the Word of God, recovers his confidence, rejoices in hope, and exultingly exclaims, "Yes, it is all true. All the evidences of Christianity sustain my hope of heaven." To all the suggestions of unbelief, to all the logic of scepticism, to all the difficulties of imagination, to all the surmises of his own misgiving fears, he opposes the testimony of God. He knows what man can say against it; but he also knows what God has said for it. He has studied the historic evidences of the gospel; and if not, he has in the power of the gospel in his own heart, the inward witness in himself. He can stake his soul upon the gospel testimony for eternity. "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded he is able to keep that which I have committed to him until that day."

2. He understands, believes, and approves its true nature. Heaven with him is not a mere name, an unintelligible sound, an undefinable thing. He has learnt from his own experience what kind of heaven he wants, and from the Bible what heaven God has provided for him. There is much that God has not revealed, much that he could not reveal, much that if revealed, we could no more understand, than a babe of a year old could comprehend Raphael's picture of the Transfiguration if it were shewn him, or Handel's Messiah if it were performed in his hearing. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." No, we cannot know it. We must have some other faculties, or else those we already possess must, to understand it, be otherwise than they are. It is too great to be made known. We must trust God for our hereafter, as we trust him for our present state. And we may trust him. He has undertaken to provide for our perfect bliss, and we may be sure he will do nothing unworthy of himself. "The glories that compose his name, stand all engaged to make us blest." He treats us as parents sometimes do children, when they promise them some good thing, and require them to trust their wisdom and goodness not to disappoint them. It is beautifully said, God hath prepared for his people a city, wherefore he is not ashamed to be called their God. Wonderful implication! It shall be something worthy not of their acceptance merely, but of his bestowment. A prince would be ashamed of a present suitable for a peasant. God would be ashamed to bestow a heaven less than that which became himself. With such an assurance, we may be content to walk by faith amidst much ignorance. Our hope will never make us ashamed. It will not utterly

fail us, and will not fall below our expectation. When the Queen of Sheba saw Solomon's glory, she almost fainted under the display, and exclaimed, "The half has not been told me." We shall say the same when the vail shall be drawn aside, and eternal glory blaze out before us. Or rather we shall say, the millionth part had not been, could not be, made known.

But heaven is not all unknown. Something is revealed concerning it. I can here only refer to, without explaining, passages of Scripture which describe it, and give the substance of them. It will consist of the moral perfection of the soul, its perfect knowledge, 1 Cor. xiii, 12; perfect holiness, Ephes. v, 27; perfect love, 1 John iv, 17; perfect likeness to Christ, 1 John iii, 2; the physical perfection of the body in incorruptibility, immortality, glory, and spirituality, 1 Cor. xv, 42-44; the presence of God in the full manifestation of his glory, Rev. xxii, 4; the beatific vision of Christ, John xvii, 24, 1 Thess. iv, 17, 18; the society of angels and all the redeemed, Heb. xii, 22-24; the joint worship of the heavenly host, Rev. iv, 5; the perfect service of Christ, without interruption, imperfection, or cessation, Rev. xxii, 3; complete freedom, from pain, toil, hunger, thirst, anxiety, fear, sorrow and death, Rev. vii, 15-17: xxi, 4. Such are the substantials of heavenly felicity. Take any one of them by itself, and each is heaven. Add them altogether, and what a heaven they make, how pure, how elevated, how felicitous! The description of heaven, as given us in the New Testament, is one of the most striking and convincing internal evidences of the Divine origin of the Word of God. How unlike the Elysium of the Romans, or the Paradise of the Mohammedans, or the

Eden of the Swedenborgians, which in fact are but earth transferred to the skies. Here all is unearthly, divine, god-like. It is such as the corrupt heart and imagination of man never would or could have devised. It may be truly said, this New Jerusalem must have descended from heaven. Man never would or could have conceived of such a heaven as that which the Bible makes known. But even of this how little we can now understand! How faint and feeble are our conceptions of these things! To believe them and wait for their meaning hereafter is nearly all we can do. Now it is the province of faith to believe in this heaven, the heaven of the Bible, the heaven that God has promised and provided; to believe in this, just this, all this, and nothing more. It confines itself to the testimony; it does not speculate upon it, but takes the matter just as it is revealed.

3. The Christian believes in the possession of this heaven, so far as relates to the soul, immediately after death. There is a great mystery, no doubt, concerning the intermediate state of the redeemed between death and the resurrection. The condition of disembodied spirits is a subject which neither the profoundest philosophy nor theology can comprehend, or even discuss. Nor is this at all surprising, when we consider how little we can understand of the nature of spirit as distinct from matter, or the link by which the two are united. We may therefore be well content to be in ignorance of their separate state, and it is no part of the business of faith to explain the mystery. It believes, but does not know. It receives the fact, without presuming it understands all about it. The pious dead are with Jesus. Paul desired to depart and be with Christ, evidently importing that he should be

with him when and as soon as he departed. He speaks of our "being absent from the body and present with the Lord;" but upon the supposition of the soul's sleeping with the body in the grave till the resurrection, there is no absence from the body. The Christian often adopts the words of our poet,

"In vain our fancy strives to paint
The moment after death,
The glories that surround the saint
When he resigns his breath."

"Oh! the hour when this material
Shall have vanished like a cloud;
When, amid the wide ethereal,
All the invisible shall crowd;
And the naked soul, surrounded
With realities unknown,
Triumphs in the view unbounded,
Feels herself with God alone.
In that sudden, strange transition,
By what new and finer sense
Shall she grasp the mighty vision,
And receive its influence?"

4. It is the part of faith to regard the grace of God, in bestowing heaven, as displayed through the mediation of our Lord Jesus. No cross, no crown, is a phrase susceptible of a double meaning. It may refer to the experience of the Christian himself, and signify that he must for Christ's sake be content to bear a cross on earth if he would wear a crown in heaven. But it may be also applied to Christ, without whose cross we had received no crown. The believer neither asks, expects, nor wishes, a heaven not obtained for him by Christ. Every thing Christ was and did for us as a Saviour, has a reference to heaven. It is beautiful to see how Dr. Manton applies the whole of Christ's

different states to his procuring our heavenly felicity. His coming from heaven was to show it to us; his going again there was to prepare a place for us; his sitting at the right hand of God is to promote our interest in heaven; his coming to judgment is to take us back with him to it. Christ in his humiliation was apparelled with our flesh, that we in our exaltation might be clothed with his glory. If he was crucified, it was that we might be crowned; and his grave was the way to our thrones. In his exaltation he is not only carrying on his intercession, but wielding his sceptre of power, to bring us, as the Captain of our Salvation, to glory. There the saints in glory are represented as gathering round the throne of the Lamb, worshipping the Lamb, and ascribing their salvation to the blood of the Lamb. This is their anthem, when surrounded by all the glories of the city, the foundation of which is precious stones and its pavement gold, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, for thou hast redeemed us unto God by thy blood."

5. Nor does faith leave out of consideration the necessary meetness for heaven, accomplished in and by the work of the Holy Spirit. For every state, and for all circumstances in which man is placed, whether it is a condition of duty or of enjoyment, there must be an appropriate preparation. The apostle's language shews that this is as true in reference to heaven as to any thing else, "Giving thanks unto the Father, who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." This meetness is as necessary as the title. A clown just taken from the plough would not be meet for the splendour of a court. He would enjoy no happiness in such a situation, but find it only a

splendid prison; and he would pine amidst the blaze of royalty for the rude and humble scenes of his hamlet and his cottage. As little could the great bulk of mankind be happy in their present state of mind amidst the honours and felicities of the celestial world. Heaven is a state of service as well as of bliss, for there "his servants shall serve him:" and we are taught to pray that "God's will may be done on earth as it is done in heaven." It is the combination of obedience and enjoyment; there must be the preparation for the former of a devoted heart, and for the latter of a spiritual taste. But what devotedness to Christ, or what taste for his delights, have the multitude around us? In heaven they would be as strangers and aliens; among a people whose language they could not talk, all whose customs would be strange to them, and with whose enjoyments they could have no sympathy. Or to change the illustration, they would be like men in a fever amidst the viands of a feast, they could do nothing, taste nothing, enjoy nothing. There must be an education, a discipline, a probation, a preparation for Paradise, or it could be no Paradise at all. This meetness must be acquired upon earth, or it never will be acquired any where. Without pardon, a sinner would be the more miserable the nearer he was brought to the throne of an offended God; and without holiness he would feel an indescribable irksomeness in that state where there is nothing but what is holy. And where are pardon and holiness acquired but on earth? The believer realises this fact, and as long and as much as he acts in character, he is seeking by the work of God's Spirit upon his soul to gain this meetness. He feels that he is educating for heaven; and labours that the

means of grace, the dispensations of Providence, and his own hope of eternal life, may prepare him for the glory to be revealed. He believes in there being different measures of reward and punishment in another world; and that higher degrees of grace fit for higher degrees of glory. Heaven is a state of order, arrangement, and gradation; and the higher posts of service will be there awarded to those who by diligent spiritual cultivation have prepared for them upon earth. A holy ambition to perform great service in the celestial state is a legitimate exercise of faith. A right-minded Christian would do much for Christ here, that he may do proportionately for him hereafter. Perhaps this may constitute the differences in glory, the various degrees of rank and elevation in the heavenly city. This then is the believer's business on earth, to be ever educating for his Father's house and home under the influence of the Divine Spirit. How delightful an aspect does this give to this world as the high school for heaven! What a dignity does it impart to man amidst all his seeming littleness, that he is a student for immortality! What an air of importance does it throw over the seeming trivialities of human life, that they furnish the lessons of holiness, patience, and benevolence, which the Christian is learning for the formation of his eternal character! What an incentive does it supply to his diligence, self-denial, and perseverance, that he is contending for some post of honour and glory in the kingdom of his Father!

6. I have partly anticipated what comes next; and that is, faith realises the believer's own personal interest in it. It is a glory for him. It is not a vast domain which is to enrich some other heir, at which he may

look with admiration of its magnificence, and with congratulation of the happy individual who is to call it all his own. It is his. He himself is the heir of all this vast estate. It is for the righteous, and he is one of the number. He is not satisfied merely with singing,

> "When I can read my title clear
> To mansions in the skies,
> I bid farewell to every fear,
> And wipe my weeping eyes;"

for he gains a clear evidence of his title. He has the Spirit bearing witness with his spirit that he is a child of God. He could not let a matter of such infinite moment, as whether he is going on to heaven or hell, remain uncertain. He has gone down into the depths of his own soul with the Word of God in his hand, and examined his state by a comparison of the one with the other, and by the aid of his own consciousness, has come to the conclusion that it is all safe with him for eternity. He sees there the work of the Spirit in the soul, tallying with the word of the Spirit in the Bible; and he says, "Yes, I, this individual self, this poor, sinful, yet renewed creature; I, who now am so little thought of by others, and still less thought of by myself; I, who am so soon to die, be buried, and forgotten; I, am to inherit glory everlasting; I am to be one of 'the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven;' I am to be one of 'the spirits of just men made perfect.'" The greater the glory, the more miserable I should be if I had not a well-founded persuasion it would be mine.

7. The Christian is favoured with a foretaste of the bliss even on earth. What a mystery, as I have said,

is heaven to the multitude. Talk to them of the enjoyments of heaven upon earth, and you would appear to them as one that dreams. Yet is it absolutely certain that heaven in its commencement is known upon earth; and to use the beautiful language of Lady Powerscourt, "a Christian should be not one who looks up from earth to heaven, but one who looks down from heaven upon earth." His conversation (citizenship) is in heaven. He is an immortal, and should have the air, the consciousness, and the feeling of one. He knows what heaven means, for he feels it. Faith gives it to him in earnest and foretaste now. The very belief of such a state is its beginning. Is it not so with all our future joys? Who that looks forward to some promised and expected joy, does not in the very anticipation, commence the reality? What thoughts and imaginations are awakened by it! The soul throws itself forward into the very midst of the expected delight. Its hopes out-travel itself, and are already there before it takes full possession. Dr. Watts has truly said,

> "The men of grace have found
> Glory begun below;
> Celestial fruits on earthly ground
> From faith and hope may grow."

Or if they do not grow on earthly ground, then like the spies which went into Canaan and brought back the grapes of Eshcol, faith and hope go up into heaven, and plucking some of the fruits of the tree of life, bring them down to the believer upon earth. The contemplation of heaven is like the sight of a feast to a hungry appetite, the first relish of it. Just think what these graces do for their possessor; what a sense they give

him of peace with God and of his love to us; what a feeling of love to him; what a quietness of conscience; what an admiration of the glory of Christ, with an intense sense of gratitude and affection to him; what a consciousness of the power of holiness and its unspeakable enjoyment; what a complacency in God's people, and what a benevolence to all God's creatures; what a stillness of the passions, and a regularity of the affections; what an elevation above the low cares and pursuits of the world. When the soul is really and powerfully under the influence of faith, how independent is it of all the possessions of this world for its happiness; how rich in all the materials of true felicity; how free from all the agitations of this tumultous scene of things; how near to God, the fountain of life. And what is heaven as to its great essentials, its eternal felicities, its unfading delights, but feelings such as these? In them then, if there be a heaven at all, is its bud. Can we imagine, can we wish for, a heaven higher, purer, sweeter than the absolute perfection of such a state of mind as this? Let any rational mind, any renewed heart, yield itself up to the full enjoyment, by an intelligent faith, of the truths of God's precious Bible; let it thus plunge into the depths of God's glorious nature, Christ's wondrous work, and the revelations of the unseen world, and it cannot be ignorant of what heaven is. If we know nothing of heaven, it is because we know nothing of our Bibles; and if we feel nothing of it, it is because we have not a stronger faith in them. God has in the Bible set the door of glory ajar, and in part thrown up its windows, that we may look in and see it; and has sent out by

the hand of the sacred writers some small portions of the celestial feast, that we may taste and long to go in and partake fully of the celestial banquet.

And now what influence should this faith have upon us in reference to the heavenly state?

Should it not raise our meditations upon it? If worldly men in their minority look onward with such delight to their coming of age, when title, mansion, and domain, shall all be theirs; when their honours, their riches, and their enjoyment shall be ripe, gathered, and feasted upon; shall we, who are heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, who are expecting an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fades not away, be forgetful of ours? With heaven expanding its glories above us, giving us the beginning of them within us, and spreading them out in eternal perspective before us, shall we be so taken up with the low, terrene, and dusky objects of this world, as to turn aside and not see this great sight? Should we be pleased with tapers while the glorious sun was blazing above us, and pouring a flood of radiance over the earth, and covering the face of nature with smiles? Would the pictures of children engross and amuse our attention, when the snow-clad mountains, and the great ocean, and the boundless prospect of river, wood, and valley, were spread out before us? Or (to go back again to the case of the minor) would the mind of the young prince be so taken up with the sports of youth, and the allowance of his pupilage, as to forget the honours and the gratifications of royalty, which are just before him? All this is rational compared with that strange oblivion of heavenly glory which characterises the conduct of the professing Christian. O man, renounce the hope of heaven, or

think more about it. Be consistent, and if heaven be so low in your esteem as not to be deemed worth thinking about, give up the faith of it.

Let the expectation of heaven be fruitful of consolation. If it be believed it must be so. Is it such a trifle that the expectation of it should have no effect in moderating our grief amidst the troubles of life? What said the apostle, when speaking of this glorious inheritance, "Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations." If all the trials of all the men on earth could by possibility be cast into one of the scales of any individual's lot, and heaven placed in the other, even in reference to this accumulation of woe, the apostle's words would be true, where he says, "Our light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." The first view of heaven, when we reach it, will in a moment cause us to forget all the trials of earth: and the first thought of heaven now, should have the same effect in measure. Christians, why weep you? Look up, heaven is smiling above you. Look on, heaven is opening before you. Let your tears, if they must fall, be as the drops of rain which fall in the sunshine, and reflect the colours of the rainbow. The last tear of earth will soon be wiped away in the first smile of heaven; and that smile will be eternal.

Let us, in the exercise of faith, be content with our remaining ignorance of the celestial state. I have already said there are many things of which we necessarily must be ignorant. Much as we do know, there is more we do not know. There is a curiosity in us all to know as much as we can about the vast, mysterious,

eternal future. Over that future hangs a thick, impenetrable veil; and we sometimes wish it were drawn a little way, if not altogether aside; or that it were, if not altogether transparent as glass, yet semi-diaphanous. No; nothing more than what the Scripture hath said can be told us. Is it not enough? Can we trust God for nothing? Would we walk to heaven by sight? No, we must wait and be contented. We are sure when the curtain is drawn up, instead of querulously asking in the language and tone of disappointment, "Is this all!" we shall, as I have said before, exclaim, with delighted surprise as did the Queen of Sheba when she stood before Solomon, "The half has not been told me." Since God has promised us a heaven worthy of himself to bestow, we should be contented in shades far deeper than those amidst which we dwell, assured that we shall never be ashamed of our hope. Without a single star to relieve the darkness of the night, we could wait for the rising of the sun, how much more can we do so with the firmament over our head, studded with the constellations of the promise!

Out of faith comes patience also; that calm and quiet grace, that serene and waiting state of mind. It is true that the greatness of an expected and delayed blessing is of itself too apt to produce impatience; yet when that blessing is certain, the mind on the other hand can control its eagerness by the assurance that it will come, and that its greatness will infinitely compensate for any little delay. As regards the great bulk of professors, I have no need to speak of patience to them. Their danger lies in the opposite extreme of a too great eagerness to remain: but think of such a Christian as I have at this moment before my mind's

eye; one who in early life was living in great respectability of circumstances, but is now more than fourscore years of age; suffering constant pain, and sometimes extreme anguish; dependent upon charity not only for comforts, but necessaries; often apparently on the verge of death, and then sent again to more suffering, like a vessel just entering the haven, and then driven out to sea again. What need of patience is there here? To groan, and weep, and agonise at the very door of heaven; and that door not open year after year to the poor sufferer. Yet even in such a case, how powerful is the thought, "Heaven is worth waiting for ever so long, even in my melancholy circumstances." The night is long, and dark, and stormy, but the morning must come; and O! what a sunrise there will be!

What is so powerful to overcome the fear of death as the promise and the prospect of eternal glory? Why, why, O Christian, tremble at the thought of dying? To him who has faith in Christ, what is it but a dark passage to the regions of immortality; to the realms of ineffable light and glory? Beyond that dark valley lies "the inheritance of the saints in light." And can you not enter with boldness the gloomy defile for the sake of the sunny plains beyond, especially when you are to be accompanied through it by him who brought life and immortality to light? Cleombrotus, a Pagan, on hearing Plato discourse of the immortality of the soul, ran and leaped into the sea, that he might immediately be in that blessed state. Cicero represents Cato as saying, "If God should grant me to become a little child again, to send forth a second time my infant will from my cradle, and having even run out my course, to begin it again, I should most earnestly refuse it, for

what profit hath this life, and how much toil; yet I do not repent that I have lived, because I hope that I have not lived in vain. And now I go out of this life, not as out of my dwelling-house, but from my inn. O blessed day! when I shall enter that council and assembly of souls, and depart from this rude and disorderly rout and row." Shall a heathen have such longing desires after future glory, though only possessing such faint evidence of its reality, and such ignorance of its nature, as to commit suicide to reach it; and you, with all the light of revelation shining upon the subject, be unwilling to go when God calls you to it? The Christian's unwillingness to die is the taunt and stumbling-block of infidels. May it be overcome in us!

Christians, I now in conclusion solemnly call upon you to consider your heavenly calling. Consider the end and purpose of your redemption by our Lord Jesus Christ. He was sent from heaven to tell you of that glorious state, to open a way for you to enter it, to show you in his own person, and to assist you by your own experience, to see and feel, how much of heaven may be enjoyed on earth, and then to conduct you thither. And lo! now the God of all grace is calling you by Jesus Christ unto his eternal glory. It is your calling to forsake this world and mind the other. Make haste then to quit yourselves of your entanglements of all earthly dispositions and affections. Learn to live in this world as those who are not of it. Consider futurity is the greatness of man, and the glorious hereafter is the grand scene for the attainment of the fulness of your existence. "O get then the lovely image of the future glory into your minds. Keep it ever before your eyes. Make it familiar to your thoughts.

Imprint daily there these words, 'I shall behold thy face, I shall be satisfied with thy likeness.' And see that your souls be enriched with that righteousness, have inwrought into them that holy rectitude, that may dispose them to that blessed state. Then will you die with your own consent, and go away, not driven, but allured and drawn. You will go, as the redeemed of the Lord, with everlasting joy upon their heads: as those that know whither you go, even to a state infinitely worthy of your desires and choice, and where it is best for you to be. You will part with your souls, not by a forcible separation, but a joyful surrender and resignation. They will dislodge from this earthly tabernacle, rather as putting it off than having it rent and torn away. Loosen yourselves from this body by degrees, as we do any thing we would remove from a place where it sticks fast. Gather up your spirits into themselves. Teach them to look upon themselves as a distinct thing. Inure them to the thoughts of a dissolution. Be continually as taking leave. Cross and disprove the common maxim, and let your hearts, which they use to say are wont to die last, die first. Prevent death, and be mortified towards every earthly thing beforehand, that death may have nothing to kill but your body; and that you may not die a double death in one hour, and suffer the death of your body and of your love to it both at once. Much less that this should survive to your greater, and even incurable misery. Shake off your bands and fetters, the terrene affections that so closely confine you to the house of your bondage. And lift up your heads in expectation of the approaching jubilee, the day of your redemption; when you are to go out free, and enter into the glorious

liberty of the sons of God; when you shall serve, and groan, and complain no longer. Let it be your continual song, and the matter of your daily praise, that the time of your happy deliverance is hastening on; that ere long you shall be absent from the body, and present with the Lord. That he hath not doomed you to an everlasting imprisonment within those close and clayey walls, wherein you have been so long shut up from the beholding of his sight and glory. In the thoughts of this, while the outward man is sensibly perishing, let the inward revive and be renewed day by day. 'What prisoner would be sorry to see the walls of his prison house (so a heathen speaks) mouldering down, and the hopes arriving to him of being delivered out of that darkness that had buried him, of recovering his liberty, and enjoying the free air and light? What champion inured to hardship, would stick to throw off rotten rags, and rather expose a naked, placid, free body, to naked, placid, free air? The truly generous soul (so he says a little above) 'never leaves the body against its will.' Rejoice that it is the gracious pleasure of thy good God, thou shalt not always inhabit a dungeon, nor lie amidst so impure and disconsolate darkness! that he will shortly exchange thy filthy garments for those of salvation and praise. The end approaches. As you turn over these leaves, so are your days turned over. And as you are now arrived to the end of this book, God will shortly write finis to the book of your life on earth, and shew you your names written in heaven, in the book of that life which shall never end."*

* Howe's "Blessedness of the Righteous."

CHRISTIAN HOPE.

Unfading Hope! when life's last embers burn,
When soul to soul, and dust to dust return,
Heaven to thy charge resigns the awful hour;
Oh then thy kingdom comes, immortal power!

CAMPBELL.

"The Lord Jesus Christ which is our Hope."

To the Reverend Robert William Dale, m.a.

My dear Brother and Colleague,

To no one can I dedicate this little work with more pleasure than to you, whom I so cordially received as my fellow-labourer in the Christian Pastorate, and whose association with me in the discharge of its momentous functions has been characterised by so much reciprocal harmony, esteem, and regard.

Our official union has supplied another proof, if such were wanting, that age and youth can blend their respective advantages in ministerial work, without their beneficial operation being disturbed and hindered by envy or jealousy.

Without pledging you before the public for the adoption, as your own, of all the expressions or even all the opinions contained in the following pages, I believe I may confidently affirm, that they are substantially your own: for how can two walk together except they are agreed?

What I here send forth has, with no considerable variation, been the subject of my ministerial teaching for more than half a century. It exhibits my latest, as well as my earliest, views of "the Truth as it is in Jesus."

In the prospect, which at my time of life can-

not be a remote one, of "laying down the ministry I have received of the Lord," it is a profound satisfaction to me to believe, that the same great doctrines which are here professed, will continue after my retirement or decease to be in your sermons the themes of the pulpit which we now jointly occupy. These truths have, by the blessing of God, raised the large congregation which is committed to our care; and by these alone, will it be kept in its present vigour and prosperity.

May your Pastorate be as long and as happy as mine has been, and abundantly more useful in the conversion of souls. And after labouring harmoniously on earth, may we rest together in heaven.

Such is the prayer of

Your fellow-worker in the service of Christ,

J. A. JAMES.

PREFACE.

HAVING already sent forth treatises on Faith and Charity, which have met with much acceptance from the public, I felt a natural and not unworthy desire to complete the consideration of the apostolic trio of christian graces, by issuing one on Hope. To this I was also impelled by two facts. First. There is not, as far as my knowledge of theological literature extends, an English work devoted exclusively to this subject. Gurnall, Howe, and Bates have discussed it in parts of their valuable writings, and it will be found treated on in connection with other subjects in numerous sermons and essays of other authors. Secondly. The importance of the subject justifies the attempt to bring it somewhat more fully before the lovers of practical religious literature. It is in fact the substance of the New Testament; the end of redemption; the glory of Christianity; and the antidote of nature's supreme evil. It goes with us where all other subjects leave us, to the entrance of the dark valley of the shadow of death; and when every other light is extinguished, furnishes us with the only lamp that can guide us through the domain of death, to the realms of glory, honour, and immortality. Thus it accomplishes what

the human understanding never could achieve, and solves the sublimely awful problem of man's existence beyond the grave.

Unaided reason never did, and never could, arrive at a satisfactory conclusion regarding the immortality of the soul and a future state of happiness. It could not be sure that the spirit survives the wreck of its material frame; for some appearances are against it, which the presumptive arguments in favour of it, are too feeble to refute. If it could prove this fact, of the soul's existence beyond the grave, still it could not demonstrate, nor scarcely hope, that it would be immortal; for eternity seems to be an attribute too vast for any one but God himself. If by any means it could persuade itself of this, it would be unable to prove that the soul would enter upon its felicity immediately after death. Equally uncertain would it be, of what that future felicity consists. Still more would it be at a loss to know by what means celestial happiness was to be obtained, and how the sinful, earthly spirit of man was to be meetened for its enjoyment. All these questions being satisfactorily solved, there would yet remain the unrelieved, unrelievable doubt, whether this immortal existence and felicity were intended for all that wear the form of man, for the swarming millions of the human race, the countless multitudes descending to the lowest grade of humanity, or only for the flower and chivalry of mankind. Thus, at every step of the inquiry reason is bewildered, and sees shadows, clouds, and darkness resting upon her horizon. To all these questions, her oracle is dumb, or gives out only vague responses, doubtful and delusive. To settle these points, it was necessary that God himself should speak. He

has spoken, and it is the glory of divine Revelation, that it does not hold out mere dim and obscure disclosures, but throws a flood of noon-tide radiance upon all these solemn and momentous inquiries. With what glowing raptures should we bless God for that gospel which brings life and immortality to light, and meets the deepest cravings of the soul. A poet has sung, with the charms of verse, "The Pleasures of Hope." It is for the Christian with his Bible opening a vista into heaven, to realize and enjoy them.

To the subject of this volume I have also been in some measure led by my own circumstances. In the seventy-third year of my life, and the fifty-third of my ministry, I have no need of a special revelation to assure me that "I must shortly put off this my tabernacle:" in the course of nature, this cannot be far off. The shadows of evening are gathering fast and thick around me, and I find it most consoling, on the border country of the unseen world, to go forward into what would be otherwise a dark unknown, guided and cheered by a hope full of immortality. I am induced to believe that what has comforted me in the preparation of the work, may in perusing it be a source of consolation to others.

Many things are seen most accurately, as to their relative importance, when viewed in the decline of life. It is in the calm of the evening, and not during the heat, bustle, and burden of the day, that men in trade best judge of the objects which have engaged their attention in the hours of business. So it is with the Christian in reflecting upon his religious life, and especially with the Christian minister in looking back upon the pursuits of his official career. I am not even

now indifferent to many lesser matters of christian truth; the subject of ecclesiastical polity still interests me; for surely the framework of Christ's church, and the order of his house, must be of some consequence: and I am therefore no latitudinarian in reference to this matter. The system of Congregationalism which for more than half a century I have maintained, I believe comes nearer the general principles laid down in the New Testament than any other. This is all I claim for it. A closer approximation than others, to the model of the apostolic churches, is all that any of us can boast of: since no modern system is, or can be, a perfect copy of what, from its peculiar circumstances, must of necessity have been unique. If ever I held my views of church government with the prejudice of a bigot, or propagated them with the zeal of a fanatic, though I am not conscious of having done either, that time is for ever gone by. Compared with Faith, Hope, and Love, those things now appear to me only as the skeleton to the living body of Christianity. No man will be either saved or lost by his principles of church government, but by his possession or his destitution of these graces. There are many ways to perdition, but ecclesiastical polity is not necessarily one of them. There is only one way of salvation, and that is, not Episcopacy, Presbyterianism, Methodism, or Congregationalism; but repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Along the bye paths of each of these systems many are continually coming into the King's high-road to eternal life. This should make us charitable to each other, and convince us upon what objects our attention and our zeal should be chiefly concentrated; for is it not pitiable to see men spending

so much of their time and energy upon the unprescribed formalities of an external ceremonialism, to the comparative neglect of Faith, Hope, and Love?

Most sad is it, that in the middle of the nineteenth century of the Christian era, so many of its professors should have, if not to learn, yet to remember, that "the kingdom of God is not meat and drink," or creed and ceremony, but "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." Our holy religion, as exhibited on the pages of ecclesiastical history and theological controversy, has; to its disparagement, been too often made to appear more like a fury, than a seraph; a demon of destruction, rather than a ministering angel; as brandishing a sword, instead of holding out the olive branch of peace. O that some voice, loud enough to be heard throughout Christendom, and powerful enough to be universally obeyed, would summon us all round the fount of inspired truth, first to purify our much abused vision from the scales of error and prejudice, and then to learn that real Christianity consists of the three apostolic graces; while all else is but her earthly attire, which may vary in fashion and colour, without affecting her substance or life, or destroying her symmetry. Had this been understood believed remembered and practised from the beginning, what monstrous systems of error, what iron yokes of spiritual tyranny, what bloody persecutions, what sacerdotal arrogance and assumption, what disfigurements of the simple and spiritual religion of the meek and lowly Jesus, by Pagan rites and puerile ceremonies, what foul blots upon the fair form of Christianity, would the world have been spared! Amidst the decrees of councils, the edicts of monarchs, the acts

of senates, and the controversies of polemics, how has the still small voice of the apostle been stifled, which says, "Now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three, but the greatest of these is charity!" How forward have men been to admire this sacred trio, but how slow to imitate them! Poets have sung their charms; painters have delineated their beauty; music has chanted their praises; and eloquence has emblazoned their worth; what remains but for preachers to make them the prevailing themes of their ministry, and for professing Christians to exhibit them in the practice of their lives? When this shall every where be done, and they shall universally come in the place of a heartless orthodoxy and a childish ritualism, then the world will see Christianity as she is, and will covet to be like her; but, till then, multitudes will look upon her with suspicion, and not a few turn from her with disgust.

I am not without apprehension, that there is danger among Nonconformists just now, of losing sight of the importance of primary matters, in seeking what, after all, is but of secondary or tertiary importance.

Our great solicitude should be to promote a healthful, spiritual, robust, and saintly piety in our churches: external improvements in our architecture, our psalmody, or our services, cannot be a substitute for this. What we should seek to maintain in our denomination is, the more powerful dominion of faith, hope, and love, compared with which many of the matters which are now much prized amongst us, are but of very small importance. Provided however our supreme, constant, and vigilant anxiety be directed to the preservation of vital Christianity, and to that sound doctrine from which

alone it can proceed, there is no harm, and will be no danger, in any attention which we may pay to matters of religious tastefulness. My anxiety, notwithstanding all that has been said to dissipate the fears of minds zealous and jealous "for sound doctrine," is still alive on this momentous subject. Others of far stronger intellectual nerve than myself, partake with me in these apprehensions, as will be evident by the following extract from a letter I received from one of the master spirits of the age, whose name, had I permission to give it, would impart oracular weight to his words.

"You are one with me in the deep and powerful conviction that the grandeur, and reality, and simplicity of the Gospel have faded from the view of many around us who still would give their 'yea' to an orthodox and evangelic confession. It is not dishonestly that such a 'yea' would be uttered, but heartlessly, and with a reserved feeling of this sort: 'I believe all this, if I believe anything; or, I mean to believe it until I have made good my position on another ground.' 'I am orthodox and evangelical ad interim.' There are many, I fear, who go on to serve the Gospel as discontented menials do, who take care to give no umbrage until the day when they shall have hired themselves to a master more to their taste. I have painfully felt this in listening to and conversing with young ministers. On the Dissenting side it is one sort of thing, on the Episcopal another; but as to the result, it is a departure from, and a disrelish of, the Gospel. I am sure you are right in foreseeing the issue; an alienation of heart from the first truths will end (as to many) in a declared heterodoxy: this, or else a hiding the face behind the mask of ritualism. A most impervious and opaque thing,

when properly prepared, painted, and varnished, is a papier maché churchism. Wearing this disguise a heart-at-ease atheist may do, say, and seem whatever is convenient. Among the Nonconformists the house of refuge is an intellectualism, which the people may interpret as they please: a spiritualism in the dialect, of which the old women of the congregation will think they hear what they used to hear, and approve; but which the young men in the crimson-cushioned pews will well know how to render into a philosophy after Hegel, or Miss Martineau, or anybody else. And yet while I so write, seeing and hearing what is going on around us, I do look for a brighter time: I do not despond, but am hopeful and expectant of good. Whether it may be permitted to me to render service (such as I gladly would render) is with Him to determine with whom is the residue of the Spirit, and the ordering of our lot."

I too am hopeful of good in the end. It is only for a season that I expect, and for a season I do expect, in our received theology, a partial obscuration of the truth as it is in Jesus. A school has risen up at Oxford, and elsewhere, in which some of the fundamental doctrines of the Gospel, especially the atonement and the inspiration and authority of the Old Testament are, if not absolutely denied, yet undermined. The atonement means, as they teach it, nothing more than a manifestation of Divine love, and the putting away of sin by its moral power over the soul, but which has no reference to the authority and majesty of the law, and the rectitude of the Divine government: as held by them, it is merely a wonderful instance of fortitude and patience under suffering of the Man of sorrows, and its whole efficacy

lies in the influence of those virtues on the human conscience, but not in his death being an expiation of guilt, a vicarious sacrifice of the Son of God. Mercy, according to their view, is the only attribute of the Divine nature displayed in the stupendous transactions of Calvary; while the manifestation of public justice has no provision made for it in their view of the scheme of human redemption. Thus while the name of atonement is retained, (and even that reluctantly,) the true scriptural idea, shadowed forth in the sacrifices of the Old Testament, and asserted in the pages of the New, is denied and lost. This, I fear, is the error which is insidiously corrupting the theology of some Episcopalians and some Nonconformists. From the writers of this class we hear a great deal about "enlightened and liberal opinions," "a rational interpretation of Scriptures," "freedom from the prejudices of the schools, extreme views of inspiration, and the narrow prejudices which trammel the noble spirit of theology by creeds and catechisms." And we have been lately told, that "Science is the basis of a rational theology, which is to give the death-blow to superstition." All this high sounding praise of modern illumination, pronounced as it is by men whose genius or style gives enchantment to their words, is seductive to those young and ardent minds which are exulting in their freedom from the fetters of old systems, and is I fear leading some astray from the way of truth. But where are the victories and trophies of the men of this school in the conversion of souls, and the sanctification of believers? What aggressions are they making on the realms of ignorance, wickedness, and misery? Systems, like men, are to be tried by their fruits. At the same time I am

most willing to allow, that by the filtering process of a correct and cautious criticism, to which the old systems of divinity are being subjected, the stream of evangelical truth, as it is held in common by all orthodox churches, is flowing forth more clear from slight admixtures with which it was in some degree impregnated.

It is however, not only from the influence of latitudinarian views on such momentous subjects as atonement and inspiration; nor only from an adventurous spirit of religious speculation, that danger to religion is to be feared, but from that intellectualism in the pnlpit to which the writer of the above extract alludes. Perhaps this is less to be dreaded in the evangelical clergy of the Church of England than among the dissenting ministers; not of course for want of ability on their part, or of power on the part of their flocks rightly to appreciate it, but from the deep conviction of their duty to "use great plainness of speech." Among dissenters a highly improved state of education has led to a more elaborate, philosophical, essay-like, and less popular, attractive, and impressive style of preaching. This I know is not a necessary result of a more finished education, but an abuse of it. Ministers may have, should have, ought to have, great stores of knowledge, and yet be "apt to teach." Simplicity of communication is not incompatible with profundity of possession, nor is earnestness opposed to elegance. Where there is no heresy of doctrine, nor even any want of evangelical truth, there may be so much of excessive elaboration, and of "the enticing words of man's wisdom, as to make the cross of Christ of none effect." The gospel may be preached, but with so much of studied in-

tellectualism of style, so much of mere evangelical theory and christian science, and in so heartless a manner, as to be likely to produce little effect. It is too much forgotten, both by preachers and hearers, that it is truth, and not talent merely, that feeds the soul of the christian; and the truth addressed not only to the intellect, in the way of logical argument, but to the heart and the conscience, with earnest warmth and urgent importunity. Faith, Hope, and Love, which are, or ought to be, the great themes of the Christian ministry, are something more than matters of theory, theses for the theologian to discuss before his hearers. They are matters of eternal life or death, and should be preached as if the preachers believed them to be so. The more talent that is brought to such themes the better, provided it be the object of the talent to make the truth understood, felt, and believed. The gospel is worthy of the noblest intellects, and it is profanity to touch and teach it ignorantly, carelessly, and feebly. High philosophical and metaphysical intellectualism is indeed a luxury for many; but after all is not so adapted to the mental constitution and spiritual health of the great mass of our congregations, as plainer and simpler food. And is it not by the necessaries and comforts of life, good, substantial, nutritive diet, that our corporeal frame is nourished and strengthened, rather than by greater displays of culinary art? A very instructive lesson, but one which preachers are backward to learn, may be gained from those instances which occur now and then in the history of the church, as Whitfield and Wesley, for instance, in former times, and Spurgeon in our own; as if to show what kind of preachers is

requisite to answer the end of preaching; so far at least as the conversion of sinners is concerned. And is not this the great end of preaching?

We may fairly ask, who are the preachers and what is their style of preaching, by whom the minds of men have been stirred, their hearts changed, and their souls saved? By whom, and by what means, have congregations been raised, churches and chapels built, and other pious men moved to give themselves up to the ministry? How much did the life and labours of Simeon, at Cambridge, contribute to the revival of Evangelical religion in the Church of England, and to the multiplication of her devoted ministers; and let his Horæ Homileticæ say by what kind of ministrations these glorious results were wrought out. It is affirmed that the plain and earnest appeals of Richard Knill were the means of the conversion of more than a hundred persons, who, in one way or other, gave themselves to the ministry of the Word, either in this land or abroad; while, on the other hand, how many of the most gifted, highly cultivated, and intellectual preachers have confessed with bitter lamentations in their latter end, and upon their death-beds, their all but total want of success in the conversion of souls! I am duly aware that conversion is not the sole end of preaching, and also that the same kind of preaching is not adapted for conversion in all cases. But what is wanted for the great bulk of the people is the earnest popular preaching of the gospel; the power of uttering vigorous thoughts in plain language; a somewhat pictorial style addressed at once to the imagination, the heart, and the conscience, as well as to the judgment, all conjoined with lively elocution.

I confess, however, to a little jealousy of some recent schemes for interesting the masses of our population in the subject of religion. I do not presume to judge and condemn those who have adopted them, but I somewhat question their propriety. The gospel of our salvation is so momentous a subject to man's eternal welfare; there is such a dreadful and deadly apathy concerning religion lying on the great mass of the population; the ordinary methods have proved so insufficient to rouse them from their stupor, that I am quite prepared to go considerable lengths in carrying out the apostle's principle, "If by any means I might save some." But there is a limit even to this, and there is, I think, a danger of passing it in this age. A craving appetite for novelty and excitement may be created, which will be increased by indulgence, and continually require fresh stimulants; till all extraordinary means fail, and ordinary ones become flat, tasteless, and neglected. Nothing but the earnest, intelligent, popular, and attractive preaching of the gospel, carried on with a deep sympathy and loving spirit for the masses of the people, and a multiplication of places for their accommodation, will meet the case.

These remarks will be considered by many a long digression from the subject of my book. I know that in some measure they are so. But as I shall not have many more opportunities, if any, of speaking from the press, I have determined to embrace the present one, in order to give utterance to a few thoughts on some prevailing topics of the day. It may be a feeble testimony I deliver, but it is an earnest and anxious one.

Now, for a short space, I return to the ensuing pages. They pretend not to contain anything new,

original, or eloquent: anything racy, brilliant, or amusing: anything for the scholar, philosopher, or the profound theologian: but still they do contain much that is true and important; much that by God's grace may be useful to the children of His redeemed family, if they read to profit and not to cavil or to criticise: if, in short, they are really anxious to grow in faith, hope, and love. And they cannot be Christians if they do not. I write plain truths, in plain language, for plain people; and if they are profited, I have reached the measure of my ambition.

We sometimes, in the department of the fine arts, meet with a painting that professes to be "after the old masters." It may be very inferior, but it has something of their subject, spirit, and manner. I make a similar pretension, and have written this book after "the old authors;" and under the humbling consciousness of its immeasurable inferiority, am in no danger of being proud of my success. I am a warm but discriminating admirer of the great men of the seventeenth century, especially of Hall, Taylor, and Barrow, among the Episcopalians; and of Howe, Baxter, and of some works of Owen, among the Nonconformists. I am aware of their faults, but, O, their matchless excellences! If our young ministers made themselves more acquainted with the immortal productions of those illustrious men, and united their affluence of thought with modern accuracy and elegance, the pulpit would regain the power which at present, in the opinion of many, it has lost.

If any readers of this volume should have perused "The Course of Faith," they will find some few repetitions of the thoughts, and perhaps of the language,

contained in that work, especially in the chapters on Assurance and Heaven. It was impossible to avoid this, as the graces of faith and hope touch each other so closely in some points. So also there will be found occasional repetitions in one part of what has been stated in others: a thought or a text being expanded in one place, which was only glanced at in another. The different aspects or relations of Hope, though in some points dissimilar, are in others alike. Repetitions, however, are not always redundances: they abound in Scripture.

J. A. J.

CHAPTER I.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF HOPE.

History tells us that Alexander, when setting out on one of his expeditions of conquest, distributed his gratuities with such lavish profusion as to lead to the question from one of his friends, "What he reserved for himself?" His reply was, "Hope." It was the noble answer of a lofty mind, and has, from that day to the present, been to others not merely an inspiration when coveting and seeking some desired object, but in the lowest ebb of adversity, a stimulus to trust in brighter days and happier scenes. Few are so content and satisfied with their present circumstances as not to wish and seek an augmentation of their felicity. Men live more upon the past and the future, than upon the present. Their memory and their hope are the chief sources of their happiness. Poetry has seized upon both these as the subject of its verse, and while one author has sung, "The Pleasures of Memory," the other has chosen as his theme, "The Pleasures of Hope."

Perhaps there is no passion so generally indulged as hope. Its subjects are men of all classes from the peasant to the prince; for none are sunk so low as to be beneath its reach, nor are any elevated so high as

to be above its influence. The savage and the sage; the wild man of the woods, whose desires go not beyond catching his prey or the gratification of his appetites; the philosopher whose expectations sublimely extend to some grand discovery in science, are all alike under the power of this passion. Its beams add splendour to the palace and enliven the gloom of the cottage. The monarch has something more to desire, and the most forlorn child of penury something still to expect. It is a merciful provision in the construction of our nature, and so powerful as well as general is its influence, that many indulge it for themselves, when none else can for them. And as it is all but universal as regards its subjects, so is it also in reference to its occasions. Other passions operate by starts in particular circumstances, or in certain parts of life, but hope seems to begin with the first dawn of reason, at the very commencement of our capacity to compare our actual with our possible state. The babe, when craving with hunger in sight of the supply for its wants, though he has not yet learnt to express his desires and expectations in articulate language, or to put his passions into words, has hope, and expresses it by a cry and a look; it is then as strong as in manhood. We can recollect the desires of our early years, when we had only trifles to wish for; but trifles which were as important to us then as the more splendid baubles that were to occupy, with a change of follies, our maturer ambition. Gay hope makes part of the happiness of boyhood in Gray's well known ode. Other passions change or cease as situations change and circumstances vary; but this never does. And human life seems rather a transition from hope to hope, than from pleasure to pleasure, for very

few sit down contentedly to enjoy what they have, but are ever restless to gain something which they have not. Hope is the mainspring of human action, the lunar influence that keeps the tide of human affairs in perpetual and healthy motion. Without this all things would settle down into an offensive and pestiferous stagnancy. It impels to labour, sustains it, and makes its fatigues tolerable. It is the parent of enterprise, the impulse of ambition, and the nerve of resolution. Stop any man in any department of activity, and in any stage of his career, and ask him what is his motive for such laborious exertion, such self-denying sacrifices, such untiring efforts, and you will find that he is urged through his weary course by hope. Let the last ray of hope expire and all this energy will as certainly and immediately stop as the piston in the cylinder of the engine when the steam pressure ceases. The labourer continues day by day at his toil, wiping away the sweat of his brow, in hope of his wages at the end of the week; the tradesman, manufacturer and merchant are all animated by the same impulse; the scholar and philosopher pursue their studies under the same influence; the warrior and the statesman, the sailor and the traveller, are all one as to the motive power of their conduct, however their objects may differ. And were an inhabitant of another world to survey from the upper regions of the atmosphere one daily revolution of our globe on its axis, and after noting the endless diversity of human pursuits, the busy activities of our race, the intense anxiety, the indomitable earnestness, and the untiring labours, with which all their pursuits are carried on, were to ask the question, "What is it that keeps all these countless millions in such restless

motion?" the answer would be, Hope. Let this take her flight from our world, and her guiding, inspiring and fostering influence be withdrawn, and all this scene of vital activity would become an inert mass, a region of deathly stillness, a Dead Sea in which nothing could live.

But that which is the mainspring of exertion is also the consolation of the distressed. Even the prosperous find hope necessary to their enjoyment. Their life, whatever accumulation of the gifts of Providence it may enjoy, would still be wretched were it not elevated and delighted by the hope of some new possession, of some enjoyment yet behind, by which their wishes shall be at last satisfied, and their hearts shall know the fulness of joy. And if hope be necessary to the enjoyment of the sons and daughters of prosperity, how much more to those of adversity and sorrow? What is it that enables the tradesman oppressed by declining fortunes to go on amidst disappointment and defeat? Hope that the tide in his affairs will soon turn and prosperity flow. What is it that sustains the sufferer, to whom sleepless nights and painful days are allotted, to bear his sufferings with patience and fortitude? Hope that the hour of recovery and ease will soon come. What is it that helps the poor captive to endure the gloom of the dungeon? Hope that his release will arrive. How beautifully is this expressed by Dr. Thomas Brown: "If we could see all the wild visions of future deliverance, which rise, not to the dreams merely, but to the waking thought of the galley slave, who has been condemned to the oar for life, we should see indeed what might seem madness to every heart but his, to which these visions are in

some measure like the momentary possession of the freedom of which he is to be for ever deprived; and in this very madness of credulous expectation, so admirably adapted to a misery that admits of no earthly expectation which reason can justify, we should see at once the omnipotence of the principle of hope, and the benevolence of Him who has fixed that principle in our mind to be the comfort of even despair itself, or at least of miseries, of which all but the miserable themselves would despair." In all the varieties of human suffering there are few that are aggravated and embittered by absolute despair. This blessed passion enters the scene of sorrow with her cup of consolation for almost every lip, her precious balm for every wound, and in the great hospital of bodily and mental maladies, passes like a ministering angel from couch to couch, causing her own smiles to be reflected from the countenances of her patients, and her words of consolation to be echoed from their lips, instead of sighs and groans. How many sighs are every day stifled, and how many tears are every night wiped away by hope! There is no happiness which hope cannot promise, no difficulty which it cannot surmount, no grief which it cannot mitigate. It is wealth to the indigent, health to the sick, freedom to the captive, the panacea for all our ills, and the grand catholicon for all our woes.

Though this passion, like all the rest, is implanted by God in our nature, and will be found in every human heart, yet it is stronger in some hearts than in others. Physical organization has something to do with all the faculties of the soul, and with the passions among the rest, and these are developed with greater readiness and

force in some than in others. We see some naturally, instinctively, hopeful and buoyant, always prone to look at the bright side of things, haunted by no spectres of fear, never despondent while a twig remains on which the hand of hope can lay hold, and following the least glimmering ray. Happy natures! Let those who possess them be thankful for the precious boon of Providence. A hopeful mind is one of the greatest blessings of life, and contributes more towards the happiness of our existence than rank, wealth or fame. On the contrary, there are those whose material organization predisposes the mind to fear, timidity, and despondency, which in some cases deepen into almost settled gloom. There is no doubt that in these absolute recovery is impossible. Still, even as in bodily disease mitigation may be obtained where a perfect cure is not to be looked for; so in mental tendencies arising from what are called disordered nerves, wise self-government may be adopted, which will greatly alleviate the disorder which it cannot remove. The passions may all be made subject to discipline; may be all nurtured or repressed. It is of immense importance to know this. Mental tendencies may be controlled. Let those who dwell in the outskirts of the land of hope, whose tendency is to despondency and gloom, and who are prone to look on the dark side of things; who when gazing into the shadowy regions of futurity, rarely see anything but shapes and forms of evil; whose vaticinations are all, like those of Cassandra, of evil, learn that this state of mind is more within the reach of remedies than they imagine. Let them not yield themselves up the unresisting captives of this sad distemper. They must struggle against this morbid ten-

dency to fear, gloom, and despondency. If the soil of their nature be unfriendly to the growth of hope, they must do as good farmers do with their bad soils; that is, bestow more skill and labour upon the cultivation of them. Such ground will not of course ever be so prolific as better land, but it may be much improved, and made to be remunerative. So a gloomy and desponding mind may be greatly improved, and though it may never even in temporal matters attain to the full assurance of hope, may yet acquire a greater measure of it. Despondency will, like every thing else, grow with indulgence; and so will hope. Bodily health has something to do with this, and whatever can strengthen the constitution will tend to remove the tendency to depression. Early rising, plenty of exercise, attention to diet, constant occupation, watchfulness against the disheartening passions of the soul, will by the blessing of God, go a great way towards counteracting a tendency to gloom and despondency, and strengthening a hopeful disposition. Even in matters of religion, good people are not aware how many of their doubts and fears, and their dark and gloomy states of mind, are produced by physical derangement. Hope may be cultivated then; but the misfortune is, that they who stand most in need of this cultivation, are least disposed to undertake it. There is a sluggishness about such persons which it is difficult to rouse. It is hard, I know, to hope against hope, and requires an effort of mind, and a determination of will, which persons in this state are very much disinclined to make; yet, as it is essential to their comfort and well-being, it is what they should endeavour to accomplish.

As hope is from its very nature so great and urgent

a power in the human mind, it requires, like mechanical forces, to be placed under proper direction and control. When injudicious in its choice of objects, and unrestrained in its impulses, what wild projects has it formed, what insane schemes has it devised, and on what mad enterprises has it adventured! How many of its dupes, after they have blown their soon exploded bubbles, it has led to ruin! The follies of hope might form a theme for the moralist, as well as its pleasures to the poet. We should therefore hold the reins of this passion well and wisely. True it is, that even its frustration is better than its extinction; but that may be avoided by a little caution. Dr. Johnson in one of those ingenious allegories with which he has adorned and enlivened the pages of his Rambler,* has one which he calls "The Garden of Hope," in which this passion is represented as seated upon an eminence, while a vast multitude are seen pressing on to obtain the gifts which the goddess has to bestow, each supposing that her smile is directed specially to himself, and triumphing in his own superiority to others, who have conceived the same confidence from the same mistake. The entrance to the garden was by two gates, Reason and Fancy. From the gate of Reason there is an ascent by the strait of Difficulty, up which they who are wise and cautious, are led by the hand of Fortitude. These receive the prize from the hand of the goddess, and are led by Wisdom to the bowers of Content. The rest who have not entered by the gate of Reason, retire with regret and disappointment. Let us take care that in seeking the gifts of hope, we

* I am indebted to both Addison and Johnson for some of the ideas in this chapter.

enter the garden by the gate of Reason. Reason will lead us to take care that the objects of our hope are worth the pains we take to possess them. It is lamentable to see on what worthless objects multitudes are exhausting their energies, and the miserable trifles which inflame their desires and raise their expectations. How wise and how necessary is it, before we fix our hope upon anything, to pause and ask, "Will its possession remunerate me for the expenditure of time, ease, and money?" Another exercise of reason in regard to hope is, to inquire if its object is attainable. I know that the illusion of desire is so strong, that many consider objects within their reach, which all besides perceive to be utterly unattainable. But I am not forgetful that very many either from an excess of timidity, from a lethargic indolence, or a stupid indifference, lose opportunities for promoting their interests which providence has thrown in their way. They cry in idleness, "There is no hope;" and do nothing because they expect nothing. "Expect great things, attempt great things," is a motto, the inspiration of which has raised multitudes from poverty and obscurity, to wealth and importance. The man who has soul enough to hope for something great, possesses in part the means for obtaining it. Still there is a limit to the attainableness of an object, and a wise man will consider where the terminus is fixed; and will not waste his energies in seeking to pass it. Many have lost objects which were attainable, in hoping for those which were unattainable; and have thus made themselves the martyrs of disappointment, when with more wisdom and moderation, they might have been the happy partakers of success.

Great care should be taken to guard against the illusions of imagination. Addison gives a somewhat amusing but a striking illustration of this, in the following fable: "Alnaschar was a very idle man, that never would set his hand to any business during his father's life. When his father died, he left to him the value of a hundred drachmas in Persian money. Alnaschar, in order to make the best of it, laid it out in glasses, bottles, and finest earthenware. These he piled up in a large open basket, and having made choice of a very little shop, placed the basket at his feet, and leaned his back against the wall in the expectation of customers. As he sat in this position, with his eyes upon the basket, he fell into a most amusing train of thought, and was overheard by one of his neighbours as he talked to himself in the following manner: 'This basket,' says he, 'cost me a hundred drachmas, which is all I have in the world. I shall quickly make two hundred of it. These two hundred drachmas will in a very little while rise to four hundred, which will of course amount in time to four thousand. Four thousand drachmas cannot fail of making eight thousand. As soon as by these means I am master of ten thousand, I will lay aside my trade of glassman, and turn jeweller. I shall then deal in diamonds, pearls, and all sorts of rich stones. When I have got together as much wealth as I can well desire, I will make a purchase of the finest house I can find, with lands, slaves, and horses. I shall then begin to enjoy myself, and make a noise in the world. I will not, however, stop there, but still continue my traffic, till I have got together a hundred thousand drachmas. When I have got a hundred thousand drachmas, I shall naturally set myself on the footing of a prince, and will

demand the grand vizier's daughter in marriage. I will let him know at the same time that it is my intention to make him a present of a thousand pieces of gold on my marriage.' Alnaschar was entirely swallowed up in this chimerical vision of imaginary hopes, when putting out his foot, he unluckily struck the basket of brittle ware, which was the foundation of all his grandeur, and kicking the glasses into the middle of the street, broke them into ten thousand pieces." Few carry up their baseless structures of imaginary hope to such a height as did this self-deluded Persian. But how many, in their measure, deceive themselves with vain imaginations! Hope, more than almost any other passion, is addicted to this practice of building castles in the air. It tells a flattering tale, which credulity loves to listen to, and though its fallacious promises have often failed, yet as men love to be deceived, they still hearken to its mendacious voice.

It is by no means my intention to lessen the influence, but only to guide the operation, of this solace of affliction and stimulus of industry; not to weaken its power within the sphere of possibility, but only to prevent its energies from being exhausted on impossibilities. It is too valuable a thing to be wasted on what is unattainable. It is wanted for objects which may be gained by it, and cannot be gained without it. We should guard as much as possible from employing it on things which lie beyond our reach, since then it is sure to be disappointed, and every fresh disappointment weakens its spring, even for objects which may be legitimately considered as within its sphere; while every instance of success encourages fresh exertion, and leads on to other achievements. "If we hope for things which are at

too great a distance from us, it is possible we may be intercepted by death in our progress towards them. If we hope for things we have not thoroughly considered the value of, our disappointment will be greater than our pleasure in the fruition of them. If we hope for what we are not likely to possess, we act and think in vain, and make life a greater dream and shadow than it really is. Many of the miseries and misfortunes of life proceed from our want of consideration, in one or all of these particulars. They are the rocks on which the sanguine tribe of lovers daily split, and on which the bankrupt, the politician, the alchymist, and the projector, are cast away in every age. Men of warm imaginations and towering thoughts are apt to overlook the goods of fortune which are near them, for something that glitters in their sight at a distance; to neglect solid and substantial happiness for what is showy and superficial; and to contemn the good which is within their reach, for that which they are not capable of attaining."

CHAPTER II.

CHRISTIAN HOPE, PARTICULARLY AS DISTINGUISHED FROM FAITH AND LOVE.

All Christians are not metaphysicians, nor is it necessary, either for their safety or their sanctity, that they should be. Philosophy has done little for theology but to corrupt it; and yet a sound philosophy must ever be in harmony with a sound theology. A clear view of our mental economy would help us to clearer views, if not of the doctrines of Christianity, yet of the best method of reducing them to practice in our daily walk. A correct analysis of our spiritual nature in all its faculties, besides the gratification which a knowledge of the science of ourselves will never fail to impart, will be some assistance to us in carrying forward and advancing to a higher perfection the duties of the divine life. A philosophical view of the nature of hope, will therefore be of some service to us in guiding its exercises.

Hope is not a simple, but a complex passion, and consists of the desire of some object, the expectation of obtaining it, together with the joy which arises from both. Its basis may be said to be desire, which may exist in different forms, according to the degree of probability of the attainment of its object. When there is little, if any probability, it constitutes what is termed

a mere wish; when the probability is stronger, it connects itself with expectation, and becomes hope; and with a probability that amounts almost to certainty, it settles into confidence. Desire without expectation is despair; expectation without desire is dread. Strong desire with faint expectation is feeble hope; but with confident expectation is assurance. These distinctions will be found to be of some service in the Christian life, as shewing what states of mind to cultivate, in order to the full enjoyment of Christian privileges. For instance, in order to "a lively hope," it is not only necessary to increase our desire for spiritual blessings; but also to strengthen our expectation of them. We must not only see that they are necessary, but also that they are attainable, and attainable by us; and we must then, as this persuasion of attainableness constitutes faith, in order to strengthen our hope, increase in faith. And as expectation is never likely to be excited without a sense of the desirableness of its object, if we would rouse up lively expectation, we must first kindle intense desire. It is when the soul has a longing desire after future glory, and a confident expectation of it, that it rises in hope till it reaches to a full assurance.

The object of hope must be something good and something future. No one can by possibility desire what is evil; or to speak with greater precision, what appears to be evil. Good, or apparent good, must be the object of hope. Here, it will be perceived, it differs from faith, which may and does believe in what is evil as well as what is good. Christian faith has respect to all the threatenings of God, no less than to his promises; but hope has respect only to his invitations and promises.

Hope must have respect to some future good, as the apostle has most correctly said, "Hope that is seen is not hope; for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for it?" Here again it differs both from faith and love, for these may have existence in relation to a present object. But while differing in some views from these graces, it has a resemblance to them in others. Hope resembles faith in regard to expectation: "Faith," says the same apostle, "is the substance (or confident expectation) of things hoped for." There can be neither faith nor hope where there is no expectation. This is an important remark as bearing on Christian experience. Many persons imagine (and it can be but imagination) that they really believe in Christ, whilst they have no expectation of salvation. This is impossible. Expectation is at once the exercise and the evidence of faith; and faith is strong or weak according to the degree of expectation. The same may be said of hope. And as hope touches faith on the side of expectation, so it touches love on the side of desire. There can be no love where there is no desire; and in proportion to the fervour of love, is the strength and intensity of desire. This also may be said of hope.

Hope resembles these two kindred graces in another particular, and that is in joy. We read, and I trust we feel, that there is "joy and peace in believing;" and we read also of "the comfort of love:" and does not the apostle speak of "rejoicing in hope?" Holy joy is the evidence of both faith and hope. If there be no consolation in the troubled breast, can there be any belief of the truth as it is in Jesus, or a confident expectation of glory everlasting?

How beautifully do the graces of the Holy Spirit in

the soul of the Christian, like the colours of the rainbow, soften down into one another! Look at that glorious ethereal arch, and separate the colours, if you can, by a visible line of demarcation. The eye cannot tell where each begins and ends; and as the union of all these forms the pure white light of day, so the union of faith, hope, and love, though distinct graces yet blending together, forms the piety of the real Christian.

And as these graces are homogeneous in nature, they are harmonious in their exercise; like certain strings of music, touch one, and the others vibrate. They are a trinity in unity, they cannot be separated and exist apart. We cannot really believe and not love, for "faith worketh by love;" nor can we love without faith, for love is the fruit of faith, and the fruit cannot be produced without the tree. So neither can we hope without faith, for hope is the desire and expectation of something promised. And then see how love excites hope, for if we love Christ, shall we not hope to be with him, and that in exact proportion as our love to him is intense? This relation to each other, and the operation of the graces in producing, or at any rate, strengthening each other, is beautifully described by the apostle, where he says, "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom we have access into this grace wherein we now stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also; knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope."

The root of the other two graces is faith. The gospel brings us the glad tidings of salvation, by the

sufferings and death of our Lord Jesus Christ. The message meets the ear, is unfolded to the understanding, and applied to the heart by the Holy Spirit. Conviction of sin is produced, and an earnest desire after pardon, peace, and eternal life is felt. But this desire is not yet hope, for the poor distressed soul is in doubt and fear of his acceptance with God. He cannot yet attain to a blissful expectation. Wandering about in gloom and anxiety, he is yet a stranger to joy, to hope, to love; in fact, a stranger to everything but sin, sorrow, and alarm. He desires salvation, but dares not expect it, and therefore, of course, cannot hope for it. Why not? Simply because he does not believe the glad news that Christ died for him as well, and as really, and as much, as for others. His sins are felt to be too great to be pardoned, or that something else is necessary to obtain their pardon. At length further light and teaching from the divine comforter and illuminator lead him to see that he is included in the objects of divine mercy and invited to partake of its rich benefits. He believes in Christ, and now what follows? Hope. He now expects to be forgiven; to be saved. The promise holds up the blessing, faith believes it; hope not only desires, but looks for it. "Yes," says the poor distracted sinner, "I believe that God has loved me, that Christ has died for me; that I am invited to him; and now my doubts and fears are scattered, and I expect salvation." Thus faith believes the great object attainable, and hope desires and expects it. It is well to see this connection between faith and hope, not only at the outset of the Christian life, but through all its future progress. Can I hope for any favour from one on whom I have no claim, if he has not promised it, or does not

exhibit in his character and usual conduct some ground for my expectation, for my faith? And if he promise me, can I hope till I believe his promise: but if I believe, shall I not hope? This is so plain that it scarcely needs either confirmation or illustration. Yet it is so important to see the connection between faith and hope, that one or two examples may be here cited. I refer the reader to the case of Abraham, as stated Romans iv. 16, 21. If he will turn to the passage, he will see that concerning the promised seed "he believed, and against hope believed in hope." Here the faith and the hope were proportional. As he believed the promise which was contrary to nature, so he hoped for what was contrary to nature. So again it is said of Moses, "Who by faith refused to be called the son of Pharoah's daughter," "for he had respect unto the recompense of reward." He believed the promise of God, and he hoped for the things promised. Another instance of this may be seen in Paul, Romans viii. 33-39; where the assurance of faith and the assurance of hope are connected; the one arising from the other, and both blending into one delightful sentiment of triumphant confidence. Some Christians complain of the feebleness of their hope, and want it to be in livelier exercise. The object of their desires appears dim and distant, and their expectations of it tremulous and fluctuating. Fear often prevails and deepens into despondency. What would they give for a clearer view, and a more animated anticipation, of divine and heavenly realities; but alas! they know not how to obtain it. They seek, but do not find it; pray, but do not get it; wait, but it does not come. The secret is easily found. Their faith is weak. They do not grasp

the promise. They give way to their doubts, and their fears must of necessity rise and prevail. Fear is the shadow of doubt; and hope the sunshine of faith. Let us be more conversant with the terms of the promise and the attributes of the promiser. Let us weigh the evidences of the truth of the word of God, and then make ourselves familiar with his omnipotence and immutability, and we shall be strong in hope when we are strong in faith.

And love will of necessity follow the exercise of the other two. Can I really believe that Christ loves me with all that wondrous benevolence which brought him from heaven to earth; made him a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; led him to agonise in Gethsemane, and expire on the cross for me: and not love him in return? Is this the only exception to the rule which says, that love begets love? Shall we not on the contrary say, and feel what we say, "We love him, because he first loved us? And does not hope equally inflame love? When I range over the prospect of eternal life and glory; when I survey the inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away; when I can in imagination walk through the new Jerusalem, and see her streets of gold, her gates of pearl, her foundations all of precious stones; when I see her glorified population, and hear their anthems of praise, their songs of delight; when I see the Lamb in the midst of the throne, and the river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from it; and the tree of life on the banks of the river, with its twelve kinds of fruits, and all shining brightly with the glory of God; and then say, I hope for all this; all this is my future

possession, shall I not love Him who has given me this good hope, this everlasting consolation?

We see in all this the connection of the graces of true religion, their mutual dependence and influence upon each other. They all spring from the same principle of grace in the soul, and are the action of the same spiritual life. In the tree there are the root, the trunk, the branch, the leaf, the fruit; yet all nourished from the soil, and mutually dependent and operative. In the flower there are the root, the stem, the petals, the fragance; yet all sustained by the same principle of vegetable vitality. In the human body there is a variety of organs and limbs, which by their all being united to the head, and receiving influence from that, and being fully "joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body." So is it in the soul, and its holy dispositions; there is variety of parts and of functions, yet unity of construction and operation. Whether we believe or hope, there is the operation of the same principle of renewing and sanctifying grace. There are not only diversities of gifts, the working of the self-same Spirit in the same church, but diversities of operations of the Spirit in the individual Christian.

Is there not something to be gathered from this, and auxiliary to the consolation of the believer, in those painful exercises of soul to which he is liable in his present state of discipline and probation? Seasons of gloom, depression and doubt, do occur in the history of most Christians, but more frequently in the lives of some than others. I would be far from writing any

thing that would tend to nourish those morbid conditions of the soul, and there is an injudicious mode of treating them which has this tendency. Still I would do any thing to comfort the perturbed heart under them, and lead that heart out of its perplexities. A Christian is sometimes troubled because he cannot find all the graces in full and vigorous action in his character; at others, because he feels his deficiency in some one of them which has specially engaged his attention. Sometimes he doubts of his state, because his faith is weak; at others, because his hope is dull; and at others, because his love is lukewarm. "Is it faith," says good old Gurnall, "that thou hast been looking after, and it has not been heard of; well, Christian, do not presently unsaint thyself, till thou hast made further trial of thyself. Send out, therefore, thy spies to search for some other grace, as thy love for Christ; may be thou wilt hear some tidings of this grace, though the other is not in view. Has not thy love to Christ been seen by thee in such a temptation, chasing it away with Joseph's answer: 'How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?' Yea, mayest thou not see it all the day long, either in thy sincere care to please him, or hearty sorrow when thou hast done any thing that grieves him? in which two veins runs the life's blood of a soul's love to Christ. Now, know to thy comfort, that thy love can tell thee news of thy faith. But may be thy love to Christ is lodged in a cloud. Well, then, see whether thou cannot spy no evangelical repentance loading thee with the sight of thy sins, as also in firing thee with revenge against them, as those enemies which drew thee into rebellion against God. Behold the grace thou lookest

after stands by thee; for what is love to God, if zeal against sin, which is God's enemy, be not?" Now this goes upon the supposition, and it is a true one, that all the graces of the renewed soul are in every soul that is truly renewed, and that the existence of one implies all the rest, though one may be more fully developed, or at least more clearly ascertained in one person than in another, and in the same person at some times and stages of his religious experience than at others.

There is another thing to be observed in reference to these states of the sanctified mind, that they are very closely connected in their growth and decay. I would again borrow illustrations from vegetable and animal life. When the young sapling grows, it grows in all its parts, the root, the trunk, the branches, and the leaves: so in the human body, as to its various limbs, the increase of one is also the increase of the other. And like this, generally, is the progress of decay. Observe the process of decline in the human frame under the wasting power of consumption; the signs and proofs of emaciation are then visible in every part. And in other cases a diseased limb may impart disease to the whole body. So it is in the new creature, the spiritual man; when faith grows, hope and love grow with it; and when love decays, faith and hope will decay at the same time. Here again is a source of instruction, warning, and caution. The Christian must be watchful over the state and condition of his whole soul, just as a person who would maintain good health must be attentive to all the organs of his body, and to any symptom of disease which he may see in himself: not only guard against blindness, but take

care of his hearing; nor guard against consumption alone, but against fever also; and while he looks well to his power of walking, not neglect the muscles of his arms, and especially be observant of disease in his head, or in his heart. Ah! this is what is wanted for our spiritual health, a recollection that a deficiency in one grace, may produce the like deficiency in others: we should look well to the whole new nature. If one grace begins to weaken, we should instantly take alarm lest the decay extend to others, and the whole man become weak and sickly. If our faith in Christ or heaven grow feeble, let us tremble lest our hope of the eternal life diminish, and we sink into an earthly and lukewarm condition. If our love become lukewarm, our hope will languish, and the decay of both will act back upon our faith. Our spiritual life is so fine and delicate a thing, that one deficiency left unsupplied, one little sin unmortified, may be attended with most serious consequences. Decay is always progressive in its tendency. A single stone falling out of a wall, if the hole be not stopped, may lead to the falling out of one stone after another, till the whole tumbles down. A single beam in a roof infected with the dry rot, may, if suffered to remain, extend to all the timbers, till the whole falls in. Attention must equally be paid to all the graces of the Spirit; for if one be neglected, the rest will suffer. But on the other hand, we may for our encouragement recollect, that the cultivation and strengthening of one power is the growth of all the rest. While we are growing in faith, we are growing in hope and love. It is well, however, to ascertain in which of the three we are most likely to be deficient,

and from a deficiency in which our chief danger is likely to arise, that we may direct our attention with especial care to our weakest part. Just as we do in our bodily health; whatever organ or limb is more likely than the rest to be affected, to that we direct our chief solicitude and care. As regards our states of mind, we have our constitutional tendencies, our besetting sins. One Christian is more tempted to weak faith, another to languid hope, and a third to lukewarm affection. We should know our tendencies; in order to this, we should study ourselves. What science is so valuable to us, as the science of our own hearts? Yet, how few possess it! With all the opportunities and incentives to obtain this self-knowledge which they have, how small is the number which make any proficiency in it! Some are wilfully ignorant; they desire not to know their own selves; they shun acquaintance with their own hearts. Others are carelessly ignorant; they treat their own souls, in spiritual matters, with a thoughtlessness and levity which are truly pitiable. Even good people are far greater strangers to themselves than they ought to be. The whole concern of religion is of such momentous importance, the great discipline and probation for eternity are of such tremendous consequence, that nothing should be neglected which has any bearing upon it. And how can we work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, if we do not know towards which of the besetting sins in the Christian life our tendency lies?

The union and exercise of these three graces, faith, hope, and love, is then the true religion of Jesus Christ. "Now," said the apostle, "abide these three;" as

much as to say, amidst all the changes of external administration, after the cessation of many things, such as miracles, granted only for a temporary purpose; and after the rejection of many things which are the officious meddling and divers inventions of man's carnal wisdom; these will ever remain the soul and substance of the Gospel scheme. No change of administration will nullify or weaken them; no devices of an ingenious and busy superstition will supersede them; no mysticism or pietism will ever render them secondary matters in the Christian life. As long as there is a church on earth, they will remain the vital, essential, substantial elements of true evangelical piety.

It is worthy the observation of all times, and especially of the present age, how little is said in the New Testament about rites and ceremonies, and even of sacraments and the Sabbath, compared with what is said about faith, hope, and love. The ritualists must go back to the ceremonial law of Moses to find a system, and spirit, and such practices as prevail with them; for the teaching of Christ and his apostles relates to other and higher matters. These things, it is true, have their place; the Sabbath and the sacraments are indeed inculcated: but where in the gospels and epistles do we find the remotest hint of all that paraphernalia of ritualism, those pantomimic services, and spiritual histrionics, which constitute so large a portion of the worship of the church of Rome, and of those who have the folly to imitate her practice, without the honesty to assume her profession? Where do we find that all but endless enumeration of saints' days, fasts, and festivals, which in that corrupt communion is made the essence of piety, and which, if observed, would rob the

nation of so large a portion of the productive industry of its population, without elevating their religion, or improving their morals? How strange a contrast does the religion of a Popish chapel, or Puseyite church, present to that of Paul, Peter, James, or John! Surely, if all that the Papists and Tractarians prescribe as necessary to acceptable worship be indeed required, the Bible is deficient as a rule of faith and practice, and the teachings of inspiration are far short of what we need for our guidance in such matters.

How admirable and how true are the words of John Smith the Christian Platonist: "But, alas, I doubt we generally arrive not at this pitch of religion to deny the world and all the glory and pomp of this largely extended train of vanity, but we easily content ourselves with some external forms of religion. We are too apt to look at a garish dress and attire of religion, to be enamoured rather with some more specious and seemingly spiritual forms, than with the spirit and power of godliness and religion itself. We are more taken commonly with the several fashions that the luxuriant fancies of men are apt to contrive for it, than with the real power and simplicity thereof, and while we think ourselves to be growing in our knowledge, and moving on towards a state of perfection, we do but turn up and down from one form to another; we are apt still to draw it down into as low, worldly, and mundane rites and ordinances, as ever it was before our Saviour made that glorious reformation therein, which took away these material crutches, made up of carnal ordinances, which earthly minds lean so much upon, and are found to underprop their religion with, which else would tumble down and fall to nothing."

If faith, hope, and love constitute the vital elements of true religion, and we know they do, what a sense do they give us of its nobleness and excellence! How clearly does it appear that it is not like the prophet's roll, sweet as honey in the mouth and bitter as gall in the belly! It is no sullen stoicism, no sour pharisaism. It consists, not in gloomy rites or melancholy passions, in dejected looks, lugubrious lamentations and mental depressions, but in freedom, love, peace, life, and power. In its rise and origin, it comes from heaven, and is ever moving towards it. The man who pursues it lives above the world and all its worldly delights and excellences, in converse with his own reason and his God. He receives an influence from God which carries him back to God; by which the faculties of his soul are strengthened, the sphere of their operation widened, and the objects on which they are exercised not only multiplied, but elevated to sublimity. By faith, hope, and love, he acquires due power over himself, achieves the noblest victories over all that is low, sinful, and worldly in his nature, and rises into the puissant state, not only of a moral hero, but of a confessor, and, if need be, a martyr. By a religion consisting in the practice of these graces he renounces the mean and unworthy ends for which the multitude around him live, escapes the imprisonment of abject selfishness, and by seeking to glorify God, enters into a sympathy and fellowship with Him in the ends of his conduct and the pursuit of his schemes. Faith, hope, and love, all lead his soul to God as the source of his happiness, the model of his character, and the supreme object of his existence, and thus unite him with the Author of his being. It is utterly impossible that such

a religion should not beget in him the greatest serenity and composedness of mind, and the purest and most satisfying pleasures of soul. Each of these graces by itself, and all united, have this effect upon his happy spirit. His religion is the commencement of an eternal progress in moral excellence, for, though faith and hope will cease, love will remain for ever. Through all his course he is ever carried forward by the impulses and aspirations of hope; which will at length land him on a shore where perfect and eternal felicity will arise out of perfect and eternal sanctity. True religion, then, the religion of faith, hope, and love, is no mere mechanical, artificial, ritual, external thing, not "the boiling up of our imaginative powers, nor the glowing heat of passion, though these two are often mistaken for it, when in our jugglings of religion we cast a mist before our own eyes; but it is a new nature informing the souls of men; it is a godlike frame of spirit discovering itself, most of all, in serene and clear minds, in deep humility, meekness, self-denial, universal love of God, and all true goodness, without partiality and without hypocrisy, whereby we are taught to know God, and, knowing, to love Him, and conform ourselves as much as may be to all that perfection which shines forth in Him."

I have lately meet with the following parable, in prose-poetry, of the relation and influence of Faith and Hope, which, if evangelised, may be as instructive to the judgment, and as useful to the heart, as it is pleasing to the imagination.

"One morning as the sun arose, two spirits went forth upon the earth. And they were sisters; but Faith was of mature age, while Hope was yet a child.

They were both beautiful. Some loved to gaze upon the countenance of Faith, for her eye was serene, and her beauty changed not; but Hope was the delight of every heart. And the child sported in the freshness of the morning; and as she hovered over the gardens and dewy lawns, her wings glittered in the sunbeams like the rainbow. 'Come, my sister,' she cried, 'and chase with me this butterfly from flower to flower?' But her sister was gazing at the lark as it arose from its low nest and warbled among the clouds. And when it was noon, the child said again, 'Come, my sister, and pluck with me the flowers of the garden, for they are beautiful, and their fragrance is sweet.' But Faith replied, 'Nay, my sister, let the flowers be thine, for thou art young, and delightest thyself in their beauty. I will meditate in the shade till the heat of the day be past. Thou wilt find me by the fountain in the forest. When thou art weary, come and repose on my bosom.' And she smiled and departed. After a time Hope sought her sister. The tear was in her eye, and her countenance was mournful. Then Faith said, 'My sister, wherefore dost thou weep, and why is thy countenance sad?' And the child answered, 'Because a cloud is in the sky, and the sunshine is overcast. See, the rain begins to fall.' 'It is but a shower,' Faith replied, 'and when it is over, the fields will be greener than before.' Now the place where they sat was sheltered from the rain, as it had been from the noontide heat. And Faith comforted the child, and showed her how the waters flowed with a fuller and clearer stream as the shower fell. And presently the sun broke out again, and the woods resounded with song. Then Hope was glad, and went forth to her sports once more. After a

time the sky was again darkened, and the young spirit looked up, and behold! there was no cloud in the whole circle of the heavens. Therefore Hope marvelled, for it was not yet night. And she fled to her sister, and cast herself down at her feet, and trembled exceedingly. Then Faith raised the child, and led her forth from the shade of the trees, and pointed to the sun, and said, 'A shadow is passing over the face thereof, but no ray of his glory is extinguished. He still walketh in brightness, and thou shalt again delight thyself in his beams. See, even yet his face is not wholly hidden from us.' But the child dare not look up, for the gloom struck upon her heart. And when all was bright again she feared to wander from her sister, and her sports were less gay than before. When the eventide was come, Faith went forth from the forest shade, and sought the lawn, where she might watch the setting of the sun. Then said she to her young sister, 'Come and behold how far the glories of the sunset transcend the beauties of the morning. See how softly they melt away and give place to the shadows of the night.' But Hope was now weary, her eye was heavy, and her voice languid. She folded her radiant wings, and dropped on her sister's bosom, and fell asleep. But Faith watched through the night, she was never weary, nor did her eyelids need repose. She laid the child on a bed of flowers, and kissed her cheek. She also drew her mantle round the head of the sleeper, that she might sleep in peace. Then Faith looked upwards, and beheld how the stars came forth. She traced them in their radiant courses, and listened to their harmonies, which mortal ear hath not heard. And as she listened, their music entranced her soul. At length a light

appeared in the east, and the sun burst forth from the portals of the heavens. Then the spirit hastened to arouse the young sleeper. 'Awake! O my sister! awake!' she cried; 'a new day hath dawned, and no cloud shall overshadow it. Awake! for the sun hath arisen which shall set no more.'" *

Now what is the moral of this ingenious and pleasing parable? That faith and hope are naturally related and inseparably united; that faith is the strength of hope, can clear up its difficulties, chase away its apprehensions, revive its languors, inflame its desires, and confirm its expectations. Yes, and more than this, for it shows us that when hope falls into slumber, it is faith that awakens it from its sleep, and points it to the rising and unsetting sun of Heaven's eternal day. There are, however, one or two things in the piece which are not quite correct, inasmuch as it represents hope as too young a sister, too childish, and too earthly; for hope in Jesus and in heaven, though the younger sister of faith, is nearly of the same age, and instead of chasing the butterfly and plucking the flowers, not only gazes at the lark and listens to its warblings, but looks up to the sky into which it soars. Still the beautiful and poetic lesson is, that faith in Christ and heaven sustains our hope of both; that faith is the guardian of hope, and that when our hope wanders from the side of faith, it must, of necessity, fall into doubt, and fear, and gloom.

* "Pen and Ink Sketches of Poets, Preachers, and Politicians."

CHAPTER III.

THE FOUNDATION OF CHRISTIAN HOPE.

"It is a fearful thing," says a distinguished writer, "for an immortal being to have no hope for eternity, but it is scarcely less dreadful to have a hope, it may be a confident hope, which, if there be any truth in the Bible, must make him who cherishes it ashamed and confounded, world without end."* Hence the tremendous importance of looking well to the foundation on which we rest our expectations of everlasting happiness. Every wise builder will take especial care, when he is about to erect an edifice, that the foundation is good, and his solicitude will be in exact proportion to the magnitude, height, and importance of the intended structure. Our Lord closes his Sermon upon the Mount with an allusion to this, where he speaks of the different results of building upon the sand or upon a rock. What deep anxiety, then, should be felt by him whose superstructure of hope is to rise as high as heaven, to stand against all the assaults of time, and to last through eternity! What is a pyramid, a castle, or a temple, compared with this?

"The cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, yea, the great globe itself,

* Dr. John Brown.

> With all which it inherits, shall dissolve,
> And, like the baseless fabric of a vision,
> Leave not a rack behind,"

While the superstructure of a believer's hope, if well based, shall outlive this whole material frame, and at length converted into full and blessed fruition, shall exist for ever. But how awful the consideration, that he will see all his expectations, if ill-placed, vanish in a moment, and will sink to the depths of despair, when he looked for ineffable and eternal enjoyment!

Every hope must rest upon something. To desire and expect future good without any ground for it, is a folly men are very rarely guilty of; though very common is the folly, very near akin to it, of indulging in anticipations which rest upon the sand. When we consider the object of Christian hope, its immeasurable vastness, its infinite glory, and its eternal duration, and consider also that it is an expectation cherished by a creature so mean and so sinful as man, it seems at first sight, high presumption in him to anticipate such an eternal destiny. To see a man guilty of a thousand sins, and depraved in his nature, pointing up to heaven, and on to eternity, and hear him say, "I am looking for all that," is something very surprising. Surely such a man ought to look well to the basis on which such high expectations rest. And in searching for this basis, we must be guided exclusively by Scripture. It is not what man says, but what God says. It is not by the teaching of philosophy, but by the revelations of Scripture, that we can come to a knowledge of it. Speculation will not do here. Conjecture is worthless here. We know nothing about heaven itself, and can know nothing about the way to it, but what

the Bible tells us. Woe, eternal woe, to the man who sets aside the testimony of inspiration, and ventures forward into the darkness of the invisible world with no better light than the glimmering taper of his own reason; while blessed is the man who, in his progress to eternity, says, "Thy word is a light unto my feet, and a lamp unto my path," and who is guided by the light of this heaven-kindled lamp to his everlasting home. And what does this inspired and infallible record say? In one short, simple, beautiful passage, which he that runs may read, the whole matter is summarily expressed. The apostle thus commences his first epistle to Timothy, "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the commandment of God our Saviour, and the Lord Jesus Christ, which is our hope." The same view is presented in another much misunderstood passage, "Christ in you, the hope of glory." It is usual to consider the Apostle as referring to the indwelling of Christ in the heart, forming his image there, and new creating the soul by his Spirit. But is the work of Christ in us, or the work of Christ for us, the foundation of our hope? Is it Christ, subjectively or objectively, on which we found our hope? If it be Christ in us, then our dependence is upon something of our own. The true translation is "Christ among you;" set forth before you, exhibited to you in the preaching of the word. This rendering is given in Bibles which have marginal references.

The Lord Jesus Christ our hope! These few precious words deserve to be written in letters of gold, to be engraven on every rock where mortals could read them, to have monumental pillars erected in every abode of lost sinners and mortal men to bear the glorious in-

scription, yea, to be printed in starry characters on the sky, that men may look upward from the sins and sorrows of time, the ravages of death, and the extinction of their earthly expectations, and read them with raptures of delight. Yet, since they are written on the imperishable page of Scripture, this is unnecessary; for there they are presented in legible characters to the eye of every man that has a Bible. The Lord Jesus Christ our hope. It is blissful to repeat it. Yes, there is hope for lost sinful man, and Christ is that hope. Hear it, ye children of mortality, who all your life, "through fear of death, are subject to bondage." Hear it, ye tribes of the earth, "groaning and travelling in pain together until now." Hear it, ye subjects of incurable disease, casting longing, lingering looks behind, as ye bend your steps, weak and weary, yet reluctant, towards the gloomy vale from which none return; there is hope of immortality, and Christ is that hope. This is plainly told us in another place; "Other foundation can no man lay than is laid, which is Jesus Christ." So again even in the prophetic Scriptures it is said, "Behold I lay in Zion, for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation." This is quoted by the apostle Peter; "To whom coming, as to a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious." But it is necessary here to explain in what sense Christ is the foundation of hope. "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God," and thus heaven is forfeited by us all. "There is none righteous, no not one." No man can now hope for eternal happiness on the ground of his own obedience. Every one has not only forfeited heaven, by his personal transgression, but deserved hell. The fall, as to any

thing man can do for himself, extinguished hope for ever. The gate of Paradise above is as truly closed and barred against him, as regards his own ability to open it, as was the gate of Paradise on earth to Adam after his apostacy. If it be ever opened again to the children of men, it must be by God's own hand. If ever the hope of immortality be kindled in the bosom of man, it must be by God himself. His infinite benignity desired to open the closed gates, and render heaven accessible to guilty men. But how can he do it consistently with his truth, which declared death should be the punishment of sin; with his holiness, which must demonstrate itself before the universe, as opposed to sin, and infinitely hating it; with his justice, which must manifest itself, by inflicting the threatened and deserved punishment? How can he do it in harmony with the wisdom and authority of his law? How can he do it and the principles of his moral government be upheld, and the majesty of his throne be maintained? Can he open heaven to the aspirations, the pursuit, and the possession of the apostate race of Adam? Will not the inhabitants of Paradise retire or stand aghast when they see such rebels entering? Will not the moral universe be perplexed by such a seeming eclipse of God's infinite holiness and justice, and feel as if his mercy had demolished the throne of his majesty, and raised her seat upon the ruins of rectitude? And yet it is a fact that God has opened the kingdom of heaven to the children of men. How shall harmony then be restored to the seemingly jarring attributes of justice and of mercy? The apostle explains the mystery in that wondrous language, "Ye are justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God hath set

forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness, that he might be just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus." Glorious passage! Wondrous language! Divine light is here seen throwing its splendour back upon the dark shadows of the Levitical law, and all the dispensations of grace since the fall of man; extending its illumination to the mystic terms of the revelation to our first parents in the garden; explaining the words of the prophet, as well as the symbols of the priest; exhibiting the moral law given in thunder from Sinai in all its unviolated authority; covering with a flood of radiance the throne of the eternal Governor of the universe; and yet at the same time proclaiming the mercy of God in all its fulness and freeness, and thus laying the foundation of hope for the vilest sinner upon earth. Yes, the atonement of Christ, the real all-sufficient and complete atonement of Christ; the atonement, in its true sacrificial intent, as a means of manifesting the glory, by satisfying the claims, of Divine justice; that only doctrine which can give meaning to Scripture, glory to God, and hope to man; without which Judaism is an insoluble enigma, and Christianity a contradiction; is the foundation, the only foundation of the sinner's hope and the sinner's consolation. This is expressed in innumerable passages of both the Old Testament and the New. Isaiah declared it in the verse already quoted, and in another no less clear and explicit, where he says, "The chastisement of our peace was upon him: the Lord hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all, and by his stripes we are healed." Jeremiah declared it where

he calls him "the Lord our Righteousness." Daniel declared it where he speaks of Messiah as "finishing transgression, making an end of sins, making reconciliation for iniquity, and bringing in everlasting righteousness." And Zechariah declared it where he speaks of a "fountain opened for sin and uncleanness." In all these passages, and very many others, is Christ set forth as the foundation of our hope; the ground on which we are to rest all our expectations of eternal salvation.

A more extended and minute consideration of one of these passages may now with propriety be introduced, as furnishing us with a most instructive, encouraging, and consolatory view of the foundation of the Christian's hope. I mean the language of Isaiah, "Therefore thus saith Jehovah, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone." That this applies to Christ is certain by its being so used by the apostle Peter. There may be also an allusion to it by the apostle, in this passage, "The stone which the builders disallowed is become the headstone of the corner."* The force of the metaphor in all these passages is much enhanced by the statements of modern travellers in relation to the immense stones which the ancients were accustomed to place in the foundations of their temples and walls, some of which are remaining to the present day. In Robinson's Palestine mention is made of this in refer-

* The English reader will perceive in this case, as in many others, a verbal difference between the quotation in the New Testament and the original passage in the Old Testament, in explanation of which it may be observed that the writers of the former generally quote the Septuagint or Greek version of the Jewish Scriptures, but sometimes they give the exact words of neither Hebrew nor Greek, but the substance or a paraphrase of the text quoted.

ence to the walls of Jerusalem, in which, as he conjectures, some of the masonry of the temple built by Solomon may still be seen, consisting of vast blocks. In the foundations of the temple at Balbec, now for ages in ruins, stones have been found measuring seventy feet long by fifteen thick.

One of the greatest of the Nonconformist divines* published a wonderful treatise under the title of "The Living Temple." His design is to represent the soul of man as originally created to be a temple for the indwelling deity, reduced by the fall to ruins, and restored by the mediation of Christ. A long passage from this extraordinary production of sanctified genius will be acceptable to every reader, and manifest the intellectual majesty of its author. Speaking of the original temples, he says: "The stately ruins are visible to every eye, that bear on their front, yet extant, this doleful inscription, 'Here God once dwelt.' Enough appears of the admirable frame and structure of the soul of man to shew the divine presence did some time reside in it; more than enough of vicious deformity to proclaim, he is now retired and gone. The lamps are extinct, the altar overturned, the light and love are now vanished, the one of which did once shine with so heavenly brightness, the other burn with so pious fervour. The golden candlestick is displaced and thrown away as an useless thing to make room for the throne of the prince of darkness. The sacred incense, which sent rolling up in clouds its rich perfumes, is exchanged for a poisonous, hellish vapour, and instead of a sweet savour, there is a stench. The comely order of the house is turned into confusion; the beauties of holiness into noisome impurities; the house of prayer

* John Howe.

into a den of thieves, and that of the worst and most horrid kind, for every lust is a thief, and every theft sacrilege. Continual rapine and robbery are committed upon holy things. The noble powers which were designed and dedicated to divine contemplations and delight, are alienated to the service of the most despicable idols, and employed unto vile intuitions and embraces, to behold and admire lying vanities, to indulge and cherish lust and wickedness. What, have not the enemies done wickedly in the sanctuary? How have they broken down the carved work thereof, and that too with axes and hammers, the noise whereof was not to be heard in the building? Look upon the fragments of that curious sculpture which once adorned the palace of the great king; the relics of common notions; the lively prints of some undefaced truth; the fair ideas of things, the yet legible precepts that relate to practice. Behold, with what accuracy the broken pieces shew themselves to have been graven by the finger of God, and how now they lie torn and scattered, one in this dark corner, another in that, buried in heaps of dirt and rubbish. You come amidst all this confusion as into the ruined palace of some great prince, in which you see here the fragments of a noble pillar, there the shattered pieces of some curious imagery, and all lying useless and neglected among heaps of dirt. He that invites you to take a view of the soul of man, gives you but such another prospect, and doth but say to you, 'Behold the desolation,' all things rude and waste. Why is it thus? The faded glory, the darkness, the disorder, the impurity, the decayed state in all respects of this temple too plainly show the great inhabitant is gone."

But let us now glance at a few of the beauties of the apostle's vivid description of this basis of our immortal hopes.

Behold, saith God, "I lay in Zion a stone." This declaration is worth worlds, since it imports that the whole work of man's redemption is of God's planning, executing, and proposing. It is no matter of human device or angelic suggestion; the wondrous conception sprang up in the mind and heart of God, or rather, was there from all eternity. "God so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him, should not perish, but have eternal life." "He that spared not his own Son, but freely gave him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" In building our hope on Christ, we are resting it where God has directed us to place it. It was God that sent Christ; God that qualified him for his work; God that sustained him through it; God that raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand. All, all is divine, and therefore all is secure. None can be lost who place themselves on that foundation, which God himself has laid. Let the believer rejoice in his security. Noah was not more safe in the ark which was built under divine direction, when God shut him in, than the Christian is who has trusted his eternal all to Christ. God guarantees his safety. He may boldly say, "Lord, I am where thou has directed me to place my foot. I have laid hold of thy hand, and I cannot perish, unless thou lettest me go, which thou hast promised never to do."

And then dwell upon that word, a stone: not sand, which may shift; not earth, which may sink; not wood,

which may rot; but a stone, and not a small, inconsiderable stone, which may be crushed; but a rock. So said Christ to Peter, "On this rock will I build my church."* In Christ there is every thing to constitute all-sufficiency to bear the hopes of his universal church. A man resting his weary limbs, and building hopes of repose and safety, on the mightiest mountain in our globe, may as rationally fear that the granite mass will sink beneath his weight, as the man who is building upon Christ may fear that the basis of his expectations will fail him. This foundation, and this only, is rock, and all besides is sand, mud, clay, or stubble.

This stone is elect, chosen by infinite wisdom for the purpose, and altogether fit for it. The wise master-builder is careful not only to choose a good kind of stone for his foundation, but the best of its kind. This word is evidently intended as a translation of the Hebrew phrase, a "tried stone." All things among men are chosen after trial. Experiments are made, when a great weight is to be suspended, or great pressure is to be endured, whether the material employed will be sufficiently strong for the purpose. In the present case there needed no tentative process. The Lord Jesus was well known to his divine Father to be every way fitted for his work. As man, he was perfect, and had no sins of his own to atone for, and had a body to offer

* That the rock was not Peter's person, but Peter's confession, that is the truth of Christ's Messiahship, is evident from the singularly striking change of words. Peter is from the Greek word petros, which signifies merely a stone: but petra, which is the term our Lord uses in reference to the foundation of his church, signifies a rock. As if he had said, "I build it not on thee, Peter, for thou art but a stone, but upon the rock of my own person."

up in sacrifice; while as God he gave to this act of sacrifice an infinite value. Millions upon millions have ventured in faith on God to build their hopes on this foundation; and who ever found it insufficient? All the hosts of hell, all the powers of darkness, infidels, heretics, and philosophers, have endeavoured to subvert it, but it has defied their efforts. Not the slightest chip have they detached from the mighty mass of this indestructible basis. Let the enlightened Christian say if he has not tried it and found it sufficient. Let the dying believer testify and say if he does not find it enough in the prospect of eternity. Let the palm-bearing multitude, which no man can number round the throne, bear witness, if it has not been found upon trial, enough for their safety.

It is a chief corner stone; it is the stone in the angle of the building, on which the two walls meet and unite, and which, therefore, gives compactness and strength to the edifice. It is in Christ that Jew and Gentile are associated; it is in him that all meet and become a building fitly framed and compacted together.

Another quality mentioned is that this stone is "precious." How true! Yes, inestimably precious. "The Deity filling his human nature with all manner of grace in its highest perfection, made him infinitely precious and excellent. Not only was he thus precious and excellent in himself, but he is of precious virtue, which he lets forth and imparts to others; of such virtue that a touch of him is the only cure of spiritual diseases. Men tell of strange virtues of some stones, but it is certain that this precious stone has not only virtue to heal the sick, but even to raise the dead." Dead bodies he raised during his abode upon earth, and dead souls

he still raises, by the power of his Word. Precious is Christ to his Heavenly Father; precious to all angels in glory; and who can better tell of his value than those who have built upon it their immortal hopes, and find continually how happy they are who believe in him.

And shall I forget the other property, so strange, so seemingly unnatural, "a living stone?" What a conspicuous place in the Scripture does that word life sustain, and especially in connection with our Lord Jesus Christ. Christ and life seem to be almost convertible terms: "I am the life," he said more than once; he is the living vine, the living head, living bread, and living water, and here he is a living stone, than which nothing seems further from vitality. Had there been discovered a stone of such mysterious power that whatever dead substances were placed upon it should immediately be made alive, what a wonder would it stand in God's universe! Here, in a figurative sense, is the very thing. Here is a living stone, which has not only life itself, but imparts it to all brought into contact with it. Our translators have unnecessarily and unwisely interpreted the original, in application to Christ by a participle, and in application to believers by an adjective, calling Christ the living stone, and Christians lively stones; whereas it is the same word in the original in both places. They have thus marred the beauty, and weakened the force of the passage. It is the Spirit's design to represent believers not only as lively, but as living, and deriving all vitality from their connexion with Christ.

After this description of, and encomium upon, the foundation of his hope, let the believer exult, as he well may, in his security. Let him see the force of the

apostle's exhortation, "Rejoice in hope." Let him take the lamp and go down and survey the basis of his high and glorious expectations, and repose with confidence on the foundation which God has laid in Zion.

If this be, as we know it is, the only ground on which we can depend for everlasting life, how vain and ruinous are all those refuges of lies to which so many betake themselves against the wrath to come! It is a dreadful thing to be deceiving ourselves in a matter of such tremendous importance as that of eternal life. I will, therefore, with the intention of guarding against this fatal error, point out some of the prevailing mistakes on the subject.

Some are buoying up their expectations with a vague reliance on the benignity of the divine nature. They have taken up false, because partial, views of the character of God; and abusing the apostle's declaration, "that God is love," misinterpret this sublime description of deity, as if it implied that pure and infinite benevolence could never consign his creatures to eternal misery. We might fairly ask how they know that God is merciful; and if they answer that Scripture declares it, they should recollect that the same Scripture tells them "he will by no means clear the guilty;" and that if there be a thousand promises to the penitent believer, there are a thousand threatenings against the impenitent unbeliever. We know nothing of God's goodness, but from the same source from which we know of his justice. If we look to God's providence, we see indeed in our own comforts many proofs and displays of his kindness; but we see also in our discomforts many displays of his justice. If criminals, why so many enjoyments; if favourites, why so many sufferings?

Justice, if God be a perfect moral being, must be as essential an attribute of his nature as mercy, and "as no perfection of the divine character can be manifested in a manner incompatible with any other perfection, even though no revelation had been given on the subject, it must have been, to say the least of it, so exceedingly doubtful whether such an exercise of benignity as the pardon and salvation of a sinner be reconcilable with righteousness, as to make it, in the highest degree, irrational to rest a hope of final happiness on such a supposition."* Such people merge all God's other attributes in his mercy. They cannot claim, says Dr. Guthrie, originality for this idea. Its authorship belongs to the "father of lies." Satan said so before them. It is the identical doctrine that damned the world. The serpent said to the woman, "Thou shalt not surely die." Do not rest your hope on such a baseless fancy.

Others go still further in their presumption, and rest their hopes even upon the equity of God. They may possibly be not only free from vice, but living in the practice of many virtues. They may present a striking contrast to the infidels and profligates around them in all the moralities and decorum of conventional goodness; but having altogether incorrect notions of the spirituality, extent and obligations of the moral law, as the rule of human conduct, and notions not more correct of themselves as regards the state of their hearts, they imagine that their good deeds so far counterbalance their bad ones, that it would be injustice in God to destroy them. Their expectation of salvation rests then upon their own doings, and they seek to be justified by their works. Instead of resting exclusively, as taught

* Dr. John Brown.

to do, upon the righteousness of Christ, they go about to establish their own righteousness. With the fig-leaf apron of their own good deeds, and, as they suppose, better intentions, they seek to cover their moral nakedness, and avert the stroke of divine justice.

Not a few, and especially those who are called to endure the privations of poverty, and the various ills often connected with it, are indulging the vain idea that having suffered so much in this life, they shall be exempted from all suffering in the next, and shall, like Lazarus, be carried by a convoy of angels to heaven. What inadequate views does such a mistake evince of the evil nature of sin, the justice of God, and the multitude of their transgressions! No. A life as long as that of Methuselah, spent in all the destitution and disease of Job upon his dunghill, would be no atonement for sin, and afford no ground to depend upon for salvation.

Church relationship and privileges, ever since the time of the Jews, who cried, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are we," have constituted a basis of hope to multitudes. They have been much more anxious to find the true church than the true Saviour, and have made, in fact, the church their Saviour. This is the pernicious and destructive error of the followers of Anti-Christ. Theirs is, in their opinion, the true church, and all that are in the true church are safe. The church guarantees the safety of her children, and the poor deluded creatures are satisfied with her bond. And are there not multitudes in other churches, besides that of Rome, who are indulging in the same fatal delusion? They have been made Christians, they suppose, by baptismal regene-

ration, have been acknowledged such by confirmation, have been sealed by the Sacrament, and are thus brought within the bonds of the covenant. And how many, in voluntary unestablished churches, are relying upon their public profession and union with the church! Alas, alas! in how many cases is a hollow and inconsistent profession the sole ground of dependence for eternity! How many have no other evidence that they are true Christians, than their profession that they are such, backed by the admission of those who have received them to fellowship and the table of the Lord. This admission is considered and used by them as a certificate of personal religion, a badge of discipleship, which, as it has received the seal of the minister of the church on earth, will not be disputed as a passport to the church in heaven. I pen these lines with a deep and sorrowful conviction that I am describing the melancholy condition of large numbers in all our churches, who find their counterpart in those of whom our Lord speaks, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven: but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name; and in thy name have cast out devils; and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." These terrific words should sound through the whole church with the solemnity and impressiveness of an alarm bell. What a salutary fear and trembling they should awaken! To what a close and anxious examination they should lead! Mistaken professors are going by myriads to perdition. Myriads and

myriads are walking to eternity over the rotten plank of a formal and insincere profession, which will break beneath their feet, and let them fall into the burning gulf below. In several of my works I have spoken of these deluded professors, and I will never cease to sound the note of warning. For not only is it a dreadful thing to go down to the pit with a lying profession, but a possible thing; not only a possible case, but a certain one; and not only a certain one, but a common one. Let the reader of these pages see to it, that he is not one who is only a professor.

Perhaps there is a still more subtle, if not more dangerous deception than even this; and that is, the case of those who are relying for their salvation upon the religious exercises of their minds. They renounce all dependence upon their external works, but are relying upon their internal state. Some are laying hold of their orthodoxy, the clearness of their views, the correctness of their knowledge, the scripturalness of their opinions. Sound doctrine I know is important, it is the source of all pious feeling, and all holy conduct: but apart from pious feeling and holy conduct, it will no more save us than correct notions of astronomy or geography. It is not the doctrine about Christ we are to depend upon, but Christ himself. Then there is with some a reliance upon the act of faith. It is a belief of their own belief, rather than a belief in Christ, they look to. The object of their faith is their own faith. Their faith does not lead them to Christ, but stands between them and Christ. They forget that we are not saved for our faith, but by it. Perhaps this is the most subtle of all the workings of unbelief. Persons of an imaginative, sensitive, or emotional character, are prone

to rest their hope on their feelings. Their feelings are the barometer indicating their confidence, which rises and falls with their emotions. If lively in prayer, if rapturous in joy, if profuse in tears, if strong in impression, they are full of hope; but, with the least variation of feeling, they are all doubt, fear, and despondency. This is a very insidious and seductive method of keeping our soul from the true foundation. There is no more merit in our emotions, than in our actions; and we have no more warrant to depend upon the former, than we have upon the latter. Christ out of ourselves, and apart from ourselves, is the only foundation; and we must go out of ourselves, and away from ourselves, to depend upon him. It is for want of seeing this in the early stages of religious concern, that so many are kept so long, in some cases, in delusive peace, and in others, in unrelieved anxiety. And it is to this also, that real believers, true Christians, are to trace those perturbations of mind, those alternations of hope and fear, those elevations and depressions of feeling, which, to their great distress, they are so liable to. Did they but keep their eye steadily fixed on Christ, and less microscopically upon their own feelings, their peace would be less disturbed, and their joy far more settled and abundant. And here let it be distinctly understood, and ever remembered, that nothing can alter, add too, or diminish this foundation. Could the believer live on earth to the age of Methuselah, could he fill those nine centuries with the most unblemished holiness, the richest Christian experience, the most zealous labours, and the most diffusive charity, all would not add a single stone, or a particle of strength, to this foundation. Even then, his dependence for

salvation must be as exclusively and entirely upon Christ as at the first moment when he came to him for pardon; or as that of the dying thief upon the cross, who had not a single good action on which to place dependence. And the real Christian knows and feels this. As he is closing the long series of holy actions which have filled up his life, as he looks back upon the past now about to be lost in the eternal future, and is standing upon the threshold of his "Father's house," and expects every moment the door to open, he exclaims with gratitude and humility, "Lord Jesus, into thy hands I commit my spirit, for thou hast redeemed me. My hope, my only hope is in thee."

But there is another thing to be taken into account, when speaking of the foundation of christian hope, and that is the promise of God. How is it we are able to assure ourselves that we can build upon this basis of the Saviour's infinite merits? If I know that an individual has done something for my future benefit in common with the welfare of many others, I still want his assurance that I shall reap the advantage of what he has done. Hence though I believe that Christ died as a ransom for all, and is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world, yet I need his positive assurance that I shall reap the advantage of this wondrous work of mediation; and I have it: "He that believeth, (and whosoever believeth), shall be saved." It is not a probability or a peradventure, but a positive certainty; God has said it. A thousand promises declare it. The firmament of the New Testament is studded with them. They come out upon our view thick and shining like the stars of heaven on a clear and cloudless night. The

design of the death of Christ was to make atonement for sin; and God's promise is that we, each one of us individually, shall partake of the blessed result of these sufferings of Christ. Here is the ground of our expectation; and in speaking of this expectation, the promises of God must always be united with the merits of the Saviour. And even this is not all, for we must also have entire faith in the power of God to fulfil his promise, and his unchangeableness and faithfulness. Notwithstanding the atoning death of Christ, notwithstanding the promise of God, if we could doubt the divine power, fidelity, and immutability, we should still find we had no solid base on which to rest our expectations of eternal life. Again I say, look at your foundation, the atoning sacrifice of the Son of God, the promise of God, who cannot lie, and the infinite attributes of the divine nature, and "Rejoice in hope of the glory of God."

CHAPTER IV.

THE OBJECT OF CHRISTIAN HOPE.

The exercise of hope necessarily supposes an object. We could as soon conceive of an effect without a cause, as a hope without an object. It means, as I have shewn, the desire and expectation of something which the mind apprehends to be both desirable and probable. It is the soul's act in coveting, reaching after, and looking for, something future and something good. Now what is the object of Christian hope?

Viewing it in its widest latitude of meaning, hope may contemplate, and be considered as exercised in regard to, many things even in this world. Any future good yet to be possessed and enjoyed in reference to our religious state and well-being, may be an object of hope. Is some important and difficult duty to be performed at a future time, it is an object of hope to be enabled by divine help to discharge it. Here is something good, something future, and something to be both desired and expected. Or is some affliction seen looming with portentous form and aspect in the distance, then to be sustained under it, and carried through it, is a future good to be desired and expected, and is therefore an object of hope. Or is there seen in futurity the appearance of some spiritual good of any kind, and some

ground to expect it, here also is an object of hope. In short, in this view of the matter, hope runs through the whole course of our spiritual as well as our natural life.

With reference to such objects the word is generally, if not universally, used in the Old Testament. Under the Mosaic economy, the future state, though not totally unrevealed, was touched upon with extraordinary reserve, rarely proposed as an object of hope, and as rarely employed as a motive to righteous conduct. In the Jewish Theocracy, which was in fact an earthly government, administered by God as its political sovereign, temporal and national blessings, and immediate divine interpositions for bestowing them, were the objects of the hopes of the Jews as such. Hence, see the language, which will be found in Hosea ii, 5, 9, and very many other passages of the prophets. It is true God is said to be their hope, but this means that their desires and expectations of future good things rested on his promise and perfections. I do not say that the pious and intelligent Jew had no hope of eternal glory. I believe he had; but I mean that the hope spoken of in the Old Testament generally referred not to this, but to temporal benefits.

II. Christian hope, in its most general exercise, refers also to those great events which belong to the kingdom of Christ on earth, and which are promised in the Word of God. Such, for instance, as the following:

The conversion and restoration of the Jews. This is an event set forth in many passages of the Old Testament, and in a few of the New Testament, Luke xx, 24; Romans xi. It is confidently expected by nearly all professing Christians. They may not, and do not,

agree as to the mode or the time in which this is to be done, nor whether the Jews will be restored to their own land; but, with few exceptions, they expect their conversion to Christ. Is it not surprising that among these exceptions should be found Martin Luther, whose strong, coarse language on this subject astonishes me? "A Jewish heart," he says, "is so stock, stone, iron, devil hard, that it can in no wise be moved. They are young devils, damned to hell. To convert these devil's brats, as some fondly dream, out of the epistle to the Romans, is impossible." In these revolting words, the great Reformer, who filled the world with astonishment at the strength of his faith in God, shews how the mightiest believer, with the strength of a giant, may sometimes have the weakness of a child. Had he forgotten the conversion of three thousand Jews under one sermon; or the history of other conversions? The conversion of the Jews impossible! Marvellous unbelief, after the conversion of Saul of Tarsus! O Luther, thou whose faith shook the Vatican to its foundation, hast now that faith shaken by the hardheartedness of a Jew! If thou hadst no hope of this, blessed be God, thou standest almost alone in thy stubborn despair. The conversion of the Jews is an event transcendently interesting in itself, and must be followed by results, so important not only to their own nation, but to all the nations of the earth, that it ought to occupy a much larger share of attention among professing Christians than I fear it does. I deplore, and I scarcely know how to account for it, that this subject should interest the Nonconformist bodies, both Wesleyan Methodists and Dissenters, much less than it does the pious members of the Church of England. It is not, I think,

to their credit that the seed of Abraham, the descendants of apostles, and the nation of whom, "as concerning the flesh," our Lord came, should, in their present state receive from them so little sympathy, and so small a share of benevolent and zealous co-operation for their conversion. And why is this? Because they have so little hope concerning them. It cannot be justly pleaded, in excuse for this indifference, that they are waiting for the visible manifestation and personal reign of Christ, when the nation will be converted by miracle; for among them there are very few who hold what is called the pre-millenarian scheme. And it is a little remarkable that those who do hold this view of prophetic Scripture, and expect a national conversion of the Jews, at, and by, the second advent of our Lord, should be the most zealous now for their individual gathering; thus indicating how much and how laudably their heart is set on this blessed consummation. What a glorious and important event will it be, whenever and however it will take place! How firmly should we believe it, how confidently hope for it, how earnestly pray for it, and how unweariedly labour for it!

Connected with this, as an object of christian hope, is the conversion of the Gentile nations. Who that makes any pretension either to the love of God or man, or has any concern for truth and righteousness, or has any regard even for the civilization of the human race, can survey the moral condition of the world at this moment with any other feelings than those of the apostle, when his spirit was stirred at Athens, "to see the city wholly given to idolatry?" In the objects that moved his whole spiritual nature to pity, indignation, and grief, there was much to veil their

moral deformity. Philosophy had long made its home in the scene he gazed on; architecture and sculpture adorned it with their most exquisite productions; history enriched it with the most exciting associations; eloquence and oratory emblazoned it with their magic fascinations; yet, with all this, it was idolatrous; and therefore none of these things could either change or conceal its nature, or reconcile Paul's mind to its abominations. What then should be our feelings now in contemplating six hundred millions of idolators, most of them sunk in a superstition which, while it insults heaven with its wickedness, disfigures defiles and degrades the earth with barbaric shapes of vulgar and horrid deformity. The idolatry of our day has everything to disgust our taste, as well as to shock our piety. Here then is the object of christian compassion, heathendom in its present condition; and here the object of christian hope, heathendom in its future renewed and christian state. How infinitely desirable is it that all these nations should be converted to Christ; that this wilderness, where every poisonous weed grows, and every ravenous beast roams, should be made to rejoice and blossom as the rose; that this desert should be transformed into the garden of the Lord; that all these nations should be restored to Christ, and be made subject to his sceptre, and obedient to his laws! How is it we do not more intensely long for this glorious change? How is it we can be so contented to go on as we now do? With an unconverted world in our eye, and a converted one in our hope, it would seem as if we should deem all the efforts of christian zeal now made by our various societies, as no better than lukewarmness, as only a mere apology for the true missionary spirit. And as

this is an object of desire, so is it also of expectation. We are not left to only one half of hope, to desire a consummation which we have no reason to anticipate. We have the revealed purpose, the declared intention, the fixed unalterable and uncontrollable resolution, of God, to change the condition of the whole earth; these nations are to be converted to Christ. To quote texts in proof of this would be to fill pages with them. David tells us "That all the ends of the earth shall remember and turn unto the Lord; and all the kindreds of the peoples shall worship before him," Isaiah says, "The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." Jeremiah assures us that the time shall come when "They shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, know ye the Lord, for they shall all know me, from the least even unto the greatest." Ezekiel informs us that the "living waters shall come forth from the temple, and flow through the earth, and that every thing shall live where the river comes." Daniel tells us that "the stone cut out of the mountain shall fill the whole earth." Haggai says that God "will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come." Zechariah speaks of "living waters going out from Jerusalem, half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea: in summer and in winter shall it be. And Jehovah shall be king over all the earth; and in that day shall there be one Lord, and his name one." And Malachi, when about to close the book of Old Testament prophecy, thus writes, "From the rising of the sun to the going down thereof, says Jehovah, my name shall be great among the Gentiles, and in every place, incense and a pure offering shall

be offered to my name: for my name shall be great among the heathen." Nor is the New Testament silent on the subject. How explicit is the language of the Apostle Paul in Rom. xi, where he speaks of the conversion both of the Jews and of the Gentiles. In that delightful chapter, his object is to prove that though at that time the nation of the Jews, as such, was cast off, yet that their rejection was neither total nor final; for there was an election of grace then of all who believed in Christ, and were received into the church, and that the time would come when the nation as such would be restored and grafted into the true olive tree. "Blindness in part," he says, "has happened unto Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in." So that we gather from these words, that there is still to be a conversion of the Gentiles, compared with which all that has yet taken place, shall be only as a small measure of ingathering, and not the fulness, for this fulness is not to come till the Jews are to be converted. Some doubt may exist as to which of these events will take precedence of the other. I am inclined to think that there will be a considerable ingathering of the Gentiles prior to the general conversion of the Jews; that afterwards, when the Gentile world shall have sunk into a lukewarm and comparatively dead state, the Jews will be converted, and that their conversion will then act upon the Gentile world with such a power as to be as life from the dead. Then will the fulness of the heathen come into the church of Christ. Let the redeemed church rise up then in the eager attitude of joyous anticipation. Let her shake off her remaining sloth. When the hand of God has rent by prophecy the veil of futurity, and actually shows us the earth

reposing in millennial peace, and shining with millennial splendour, under the sceptre of Christ, when the song of jubilee poured forth by a regenerated world, is already heard by the ear of faith, shall our hope be low and languid?

But another part of the object of christian hope, as regards the earthly prospects of the church, is the downfall and utter subversion of Mahommedanism. The three great works of the devil are Idolatry, Mahommedanism, and Popery; and it is probable that their destruction will be contemporaneous. The rise, progress, and wide extension of the Mahommedan power have been a matter of perplexity to many minds, as neutralising the argument for the divine authority of Christianity, arising from its great diffusion. The success of the Arabian impostor, however, is easily accounted for, by the adaptation of the doctrines precepts and institutions of his religion to the prejudices and inclinations of the tribes among whom they were first promulgated; by the ignorance, semi-barbarism, and minute division of those Arabian hordes; and above all, by the resistless force of his conquering arms. The Koran or death was his watchword. "But if we carefully attend to the nature of the religion of Christ, the means by which it was propagated, and the opposition it had to encounter, we must be convinced that its speedy and extensive reception are facts which can be satisfactorily accounted for only on the supposition that this religion is true, and has been in all ages the peculiar object of the favourable superintendence of the Governor of the world. But its principles and precepts, its doctrines and duties, are opposed to the strongest prejudices and wishes of the depraved understanding

and heart. Its doctrines are equally removed from the absurdities of the popular faith, and the refinements of the schools of philosophy, and its injunctions are at open variance with the strongest passions of fallen human nature. Mahommedanism was propagated by the sword, Christianity only by persuasion."* How beautiful is this contrast drawn by Bishop Sherlock: "Go to your natural religion; lay before her Mohammed and his disciples arrayed in armour and in blood, riding in triumph over the spoils of thousands and tens of thousands who fell by his victorious sword; show her the cities which he set in flames, the countries which he ravaged and destroyed, and the miserable distress of all the inhabitants of the earth. When she has viewed him in this scene, carry her into his retirements; show her the prophet's chamber, his concubines and wives; let her see his adultery, and hear him allege revelation and his divine commission to justify his lust and his oppression. When she is tired with this prospect, then show her the blessed Jesus, humble and meek, doing good to all the sons of men, patiently instructing both the ignorant and the perverse. Let her see him in his most retired privacies; let her follow him to the mount, and hear his devotions and supplications to God. Carry her to his table to view his poor fare and hear his heavenly discourse. Let her see him injured, but not provoked; let her attend him to the tribunal, and consider the patience with which he endured the scoffs and reproaches of his enemies. Lead her to his cross; and let her view him in the agony of death, and hear his last prayer for his persecutors; 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.' When natural religion has viewed

* "The Three Gatherings:" by Dr John Brown, of Edinburgh.

both, ask which is the prophet of God? But her answer we have already heard; when she saw part of this scene through the eyes of the centurion who attended at the cross; by him she spake and said, 'Truly this man was the Son of God.'" The Mahommedan power, symbolised in the book of the Apocalypse by the "false Prophet," is, with the Papal Beast, to be cast into the lake that burneth with brimstone and fire. And, to allude to its chosen emblem, its crescent is growing more and more pale, and will one day be lost amidst the splendour of the Sun of Righteousness. Signs of decay in the strength of Islamism are exhibited in various parts of the earth, and especially in Turkey, its leading power. The late concessions of the Sultan in favour of liberty of conscience, even to Mussulmans embracing Christianity, however short they may fall of what some imagine to be the state of the law, or however they may be resisted by the prejudices of his subjects, are a considerable step towards the overthrow of that proud system which, for nearly twelve centuries, has thrown its baleful shadow over so large a portion of the world. The existence in Turkey of unrestricted toleration for the operations of christian zeal now carried on by the American missionaries, for the conversion of the members of the Greek and Armenian churches, must pave the way for the reception of the Gospel by the Turks; and it is an undoubted fact, that hundreds of Turks are now purchasing the Scriptures. British connection with Turkey should by all legitimate means be maintained, if not from political motives, for christian ones. France and Austria would give all their countenance and support to Popery, and Russia to what is as bad, the superstition of the Greek Church. Pro-

testantism and evangelical religion look to England, under God, for their protection, if not for their existence, in Turkey. Those devoted men from the United States are now rekindling the long-extinguished lamps of the seven golden candlesticks in Asia Minor, and He who in days of yore walked amidst them, is again commencing his stately goings in that region of darkness and desolation. Let christian hope, then, anticipate the subversion of Mahommedanism.

As Protestants, aware of the dreadful nature of Popery, we place the destruction of this awful and terrible system among the objects of our fervent desire and assured expectation. We regard Popery as the master-piece of Satanic craft and malice: his richest trophy, and his proudest triumph. The Pope is his vicar upon earth and not Christ's; and the Vatican is his chosen seat of dominion among men. Idolatry was a great invention; Mahommedanism was a mighty stretch of diabolical craft; but Popery transcends both. The other two were devices without the pale of revealed religion; this is within it: they opposed Christianity; this corrupts it: they try to destroy it; this goes far to make it destroy itself. The permission of its existence is the deepest mystery of God's government, next to the introduction of moral evil into the universe. And in the history of the human race, its prevalence over so large a portion of the civilized world, and in the brightest eras of science, learning, and liberty, is one of the most puzzling phenomena of man's intellectual nature. There is no accounting for this prevalence of a system, which shocks the reason by the monstrosity of its doctrines; opposes revelation by its polity and ceremonies; enslaves the conscience by its sacerdotal

assumptions; penetrates into the secrets of courts, cabinets, and families, by its all searching confessional; and conspires against the liberties of mankind by its civil and ecclesiastical tyranny; but upon the principle laid down by the apostle, where he says that "God shall send upon them a strong delusion to believe a lie." Its present aspect, especially as compared with its condition little more than half a century ago, may beget, in some minds, a doubt as to its ultimate downfall. We have been told of the various risings up of the human mind in revolt against the tyranny of the Papacy, and how they have been successively vanquished or withstood, till its destruction is really become a hopeless object. Be it so with those who look only to human means, and "who err not knowing the Scriptures." Let timid hearts and unbelieving minds quail. Its utter downfall is an object of assured christian hope. Its destruction is not only desired, intensely desired, but confidently expected. The book of the Revelation, with whatever obscurity it may speak of the details of times and seasons, publishes the great fact, reveals in outline the grand catastrophe, of the complete and final overthrow of the anti-christian powers. Faith sees the mighty angel with the millstone in his hand, while hope stands waiting exultingly, yet patiently, to see him dash it in the flood, and to hear him say, "Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all."

Here, then, is the object of the Christian's hope, so far as earth and time are concerned, a redeemed, regenerated, holy, happy world. It is for this he longs, and prays, and labours: and this he confidently

expects, because God has promised it: this is the foundation, justification, and encouragement, of all his efforts for the conversion of the nations to Christ. All our missionary institutions are based upon this hope. This is the spring of all our energies, and the stimulus of our labours. This sustains us under sacrifices and self-denial, discouragement and defeat, delay and disappointment. We have God's command for our warrant; God's promise for our support; God's glory for our end; and God's approbation for our reward. Amidst the restless tides, the perpetual vicissitudes, and the mighty revolutions, of human affairs, we go on with our missionary enterprise, assured we shall not labour in vain. It is a work of faith, a labour of love, and therefore we carry it on with the patience of hope.

III. But, though a Christian may and should hope for all the blessings I have mentioned, the christian hope, which the apostles so frequently speak of in their writings, has respect to something ulterior, to something above our earth, and beyond the range of time. It penetrates the veil that conceals the unseen world, and lays hold of the invisible realities of eternity. Hope is one great part of the life of true religion; and religion, while it imposes many obligations, and confers many blessings upon earth, points heavenwards. It is a messenger from Paradise, and its chief business is to lead us there, though it also bestows many favours upon us by the way.

1. The first object of christian hope in this view of it, is an entrance into heaven immediately after death. I am aware that this is neither the sole nor the highest object of christian desire and expectation; and that of course, the felicity of the Christian in his disembodied state, is not complete; and also that less

is said about his entrance into glory at his death, than about the day of Christ's second coming, and the scenes of that glorious advent. Yet something is said about it, and therefore something should be thought about it. Be it so that our felicity is not complete till the resurrection morning, and that the revelation of Christ is the event to which the sacred writers direct our attention; yet, is it nothing to throw off the burden of the flesh; nothing to have done with sin and sorrow, care and fear, labour and weariness, disease and death; nothing to have passed through the dark valley, and to arrive safely in the kingdom of light and glory? If the post-millenarians think too little of Christ's second coming as an object of hope, the pre-millenarians think too little of death as a time of the believer's emancipation. The apostle's mind, at any rate, appears to have been much taken up with the idea of his going to heaven at his death, when he said, "For me to die is gain: I have a desire to depart and be with Christ. We are confident, I say, and willing to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord." Our Lord, who attached great importance to this word, directed the attention of his people to it, where he says, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." So did his beloved apostle in that precious declaration, "I heard a voice saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord." That the believer continues a conscious existence after death till the resurrection, and enters upon his eternal repose immediately after dissolution, is evident from the language of the apostle just quoted. For would not every one, unbiassed by system, conclude from his language that he hoped to be with Christ immediately on his

departure, and that, in fact, he desired his departure purposely to be with him? Had he not expected this, would he not rather have desired to remain? For surely he must have thought it better to live and labour for Christ, than lie in an unconscious state in the grave. Nay, if this were not the case, would not his decease be a going away from the presence of Christ which he enjoyed upon earth? How could he be absent from the body at all, if the soul were to sleep with it till the resurrection? Nothing can be clearer or more certain than that the apostle thought he should at his death go to heaven. And the materialist must, in order to get rid of this fact, go on to deny that he spoke by inspiration, and was labouring under mistake when he penned these words. The existence of separate spirits was intimated in several passages of even the Old Testament. "Then shall the dust return to the earth, and the spirit to God who gave it." "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory." "My flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever." "The righteous is taken away from the evil to come. He shall enter into peace, they shall rest in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness." Our Lord has settled this point not only in his promise to the penitent thief, when he said "This day shalt thou be with me in Paradise," but when he said to the Jews, "But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." We are also told that the martyr Stephen departed saying, "Lord Jesus,

receive my spirit." Other passages may be quoted in proof of this doctrine: Romans viii, 10, 11; Matt. x, 28; Luke xvi, 22, 28; 2 Cor. v, 1, 4; 2 Cor. xii, 2, 3; 1 Thes. v, 10; 1 Peter iii, 18, 20; and 2 Peter i, 13, 14. Neither our reason, nor our experience, nor our observation, can enable us to comprehend, or even conjecture, how our disembodied spirits will exist and act separated from their earthly companion. Whether, indeed, they are pure spirit at all, we can hardly say, some being of opinion that God only is this, and that even angels have some refined material dwelling; and if our souls are pure spirit, we cannot conceive what relation they will have to space, and how they will communicate with each other. These, and many other questions, such as the place of their residence, their occupations, and their means of inter-communion, which an inquisitive curiosity and a fruitless speculation might ask, and which no divinity or philosophy could answer, may sometimes engage and perplex the thoughts of believers. Men of inquisitive and speculative minds have hazardously launched theories with respect to the place and condition of disembodied spirits. I pass by the monstrous and unscriptural dogma of the Popish purgatory, and advert only to those notions which have been held by Protestant writers. Bishop Horsley, a man of vast intellect, of profound research, and in many points, of sound theology, yet fanciful both as a critic and a theorist, has a sermon on this subject founded on the words, "Being put to death in the flesh, but quickened in the spirit, by which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison, which sometimes were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah." On this passage, and one or two more, the

Romanists rest their doctrine of purgatory, with which it has nothing in the world to do; for the preaching of Christ to the spirits in prison is here limited to the antediluvians, whereas the souls alleged to be in purgatory are those of the human race generally. Moreover, no Romanist I suppose, asserts that Christ now goes to preach to the souls in purgatory. The meaning of the passage is this: the spirits in prison are the souls of the wicked antediluvians, to whom Christ by the ministry of Noah preached, while the ark was being built. Bishop Horsley considers the spirits in prison to mean the souls of good men in general, not in a penal state, but only in some place of safe keeping until the judgment day, when they will be brought to the full participation of heaven, by the resurrection of the body, and the re-union of the soul with it; and that to these in their separate state, their place of seclusion from the external world, their invisible mansion, their place of unfinished happiness, consisting in rest security and hope more than in enjoyment, the spirit of Christ went as soon as he expired on the cross, and preached the glad tidings that he had offered the sacrifice of their redemption, and was about to appear before the Father as their intercessor, addressing himself to all the pious dead alike, and that the antediluvians are particularly mentioned to show that there were some even of them that were in this prison, to hear this preaching of Christ. The object of the bishop, besides giving his view of the state of departed souls, is to explain and justify that most doubtful article of what is called the apostle's creed, which says, "He descended into hell." Will it be believed that even "the venerable Calvin" as the bishop calls him, hazarded the extravagant as-

sertion that our blessed Lord actually went down into the place of torment, and there sustained the pains of a reprobate soul in punishment? The bishop shows what is very true, that the word "hell" both in the Old Testament and in the New, generally means "the unseen world," the world of spirits, including the spirits both of the good and bad. Now, to that part of the invisible state which contains the spirits of the good, our Lord went at his death; and this, he says, is the meaning of the creed "He descended into hell," and at that time preached to the souls in prison. But this is a gratuitous assumption, nowhere else asserted in Scripture, and not proved by the passage itself on which it is founded. The article in the creed is, as I have said, most unhappily expressed, and leads the unlearned to suppose that Christ actually did descend to the place of lost souls. The simple meaning of the passage already given is, in my view, the true one, that the spirits of the wicked antediluvians to whom in the days of their flesh Christ had preached by the ministry of Noah, then when the apostle wrote, were in prison. The bishop's view of the state of departed souls being in some limbo, as the casuists called it, but not in heaven, derives no support from this passage, or from any other. The pious are immediately after death in heaven with the Lord. The better way is not to allow these difficulties to occupy our thoughts at all; to put them aside, and to be satisfied, as Paul appears to have been, with this one idea, that "we shall be ever with the Lord." We need not ask how we shall see him without bodily eyes, or hear him without the organs of sound. Do we not sometimes realise his presence now? Are there not seasons when we can no more doubt that we are in

communion with him than we can doubt our own consciousness? Yet we see him not, hear him not, touch him not. The exercise is purely a mental one; our thinking powers alone are exercised. No bodily organ is employed, no sensation is transmitted along any nerve to the brain. It is a mental presence, and a mental bliss. If the soul is not out of the body, which of course it is not, it is acting with the bodily senses, and though an unhealthy state of the brain would prevent these exercises of thought, yet this does not prove that the soul is so dependent upon the brain for its operations that it cannot act without it. Still I admit that the soul, though as perfectly happy as it can be in a disembodied state, is not until the resurrection in a perfect state of full and final bliss.

But the supreme object of christian desire and expectation is that which the apostle has set forth in his epistle to Titus, "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ." Before I come to the consideration of my design in bringing forward this passage, I will give a brief exposition of its meaning, so far as it contains a description of the person of Christ. Critics of the highest authority in Greek literature, read it as I have rendered it. Our version makes a distinction between the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, representing them as two persons, and both appearing together at the last day. The proposed emendation speaks but of one, and that one Christ. "In this passage," says Dr. Smith, "the coalescence of the two nouns, 'God and Saviour' as the attribution of the one person, 'Jesus Christ' is maintained upon the rules of the Greek idiom. We are obliged to construe it so,

unless we would violate the determinate use of the language, the constant practice of the sacred writers, and the evidence arising from the uniform testimony of the Christian fathers, to whom the language of the New Testament was vernacular." "The Latin writers," says Dr. Wordsworth, "as many as convey their sense of the meaning of St. Paul's words, strictly agree, with two poor and doubtful exceptions, with the uniform voice of the Greek interpreters; so that it is the more to be regretted and wondered at, that our English translators should have deprived us of that interpretation which was the only one ever preached in all the ancient churches." In support of this view of the meaning of the passage, it may be alleged that a visible glorious appearance, for if an appearance it must be a visible one, is always in the language of the New Testament attributed to Christ, and not to the Father, or to the Godhead. No one accustomed to Paul's views and mode of writing, can well doubt that when he used this language he had his eye throughout on the Son of God, and that he expected no other manifestation, even of the great God, than such as would be made in and through him. And we may fairly argue that this is the view which most ordinary readers would take. And from it they would necessarily conclude that Christ is truly and properly God. For it is not conceivable if Jesus Christ were a mere man, a prophet, and a teacher, though the chief of all men, and the greatest of all prophets, that his appearance would be thus represented as the supreme and ultimate object of hope to the whole christian church through all the ages of its entire earthly history. Christ, then, is to appear. He is now the object of belief: he is hereafter to be the

object of vision. We are now blessed in believing on him: we shall hereafter be more blessed in seeing him. We are not to imagine that this contradicts his expressions to Thomas, when he rebuked him for his incredulity in the following language, "Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." Our Lord is not here comparing believing with seeing, so much as speaking of the different degrees of faith. Happy, or worthy of commendation, are they who have not seen, and yet have, upon credible evidence, believed. There were some of the apostles, and other persons perhaps, who, calling to recollection Christ's own predictions, had, upon the report of others, believed that he was risen from the dead, while Thomas demanded the evidence of his senses. Their faith was much stronger than his, and more entitled to commendation. From hence it seems probable that there might have been somewhat of boasting on the part of Thomas, in his speech on the evening of the resurrection, that he was a man of too strong an understanding to be easily imposed upon. He would not believe that his Master was risen on such trivial evidence as the reports of the women: nothing would satisfy him but ocular demonstration. And our Lord while he praised those among the disciples who had believed credible report, (full well knowing that through all future ages faith must be grounded on the evidence of authentic testimony, and not on that of the senses), intended to bestow his commendation on all who should in after times believe on him through the inspired report of his witnesses. His language, therefore, is not a comparison between the blessedness of believing and seeing,

as if there were more happiness in the former than in the latter; for then the least believer on earth would be more blessed than the highest apostle in heaven. It is a eulogium on all who, before the second coming of Christ, instead of demanding the evidence of sense, or more proof than God has given us of the mission of his Son, should, with meekness, humility, and candour, yield to that which he has given us. It was for our encouragement these gracious words were spoken. We have not seen him, but we have abundant evidence that he is what he said he was, the Son of God; that he did what it is said he did, died for our offences, and rose again for our justification: and therefore in him whom we have not seen we believe; and believing in him, we love him, and rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. Oh, no: we cannot put believing above seeing. There is joy and peace in believing, just as there is joy in the well-authenticated report that some dear friend or relative, who is furthering our interests abroad, is alive and well, remembers us, and will soon return to us. Every letter that brings glad tidings of his love, and activity, and his purpose to return gives us delight. Believing is in this case a happy state of mind; but what is it to the bliss of seeing our friend himself, beholding him in full prosperity and health, pressing his hand, hearing his voice, and beholding his smiles? Those only can conceive of such raptures who have experienced them. Yes, and so it will be in regard to Christ. We do rejoice in faith. To believe what is testified of Christ must be followed with unutterable joy, when our belief is intelligent and strong. We do not wonder the apostle should say, "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again, I say, rejoice."

But what is this to the vision of the Saviour? Old Jacob rejoiced in the report which his sons brought him of Joseph's state and splendour in Egypt; but what was that compared with the almost overpowering rapture of seeing his glory, and feeling his arms clasping him to his bosom? What deep and solemn emotions are produced by the emblems of Christ's broken body in the supper of the Lord! How much are men of highly susceptible and imaginative minds moved by the masterpieces of painting in which he is represented, although they generally relate to scenes of his humiliation. But what artist can ever attempt to rise to the glorious appearance of Jesus as our great God and Saviour? It were almost blasphemy to attempt it. Indeed, though it may seem like an expression of Vandalism to say so, I am sometimes inclined to wish that artists had left the person and work of Christ out of the circle of their subjects, as too sacred and too grand for pictorial representation. The sculptor may pourtray in marble, and the painter on canvass, the humanity of Christ, but they cannot exhibit to the senses the divinity with which it was mysteriously united; they may delineate the outward cross on which that humanity was nailed, but they cannot set forth the cross in the soul of the divine sufferer; they may give vivid expression to the passion of grief and the virtue of patience which the countenance exhibits, but not to the divine power by which all was sustained; they may excite our sympathies, but all their genius can do nothing to strengthen our faith; so that all their images and their pictures, however they may gratify our taste, do very little to increase our knowledge and invigorate our hope. The inspired

history of the sacred writers can alone answer these ends. But we have only to believe, hope, and wait, and the divine reality of a revealed Saviour shall be exhibited to the senses of our resurrection bodies. In what magnificence of language, in what splendour of imagery, in what sublimity of thought, have the sacred writers set forth the stupendous event of the second advent of Christ! I will here bring together, and hope the reader will turn to them, a few of the passages in which this is announced to us. Our Lord himself begins the description, Mat. xxv, 31, and the apostles follow: 1 Cor. xv; 1 Thes. iv, 13-18; Col. iii, 4; 2 Thes. 1, 7-10, ii, 8; 2 Peter iii, 10-13; 1 John iii, 2; Rev. 1, 7, xx, xxi, xxii. I enter not on the controverted subject of his pre-millennial or post-millennial coming. In whatever sense it is understood, it is the supreme object of the christian hope, as set forth in the New Testament. No christian mind can be insensible to its profound and absorbing interest, alone and apart from all the events that stand connected with it. Were it possible to call from the grave any of the great geniuses that have adorned, blessed, and elevated our common nature, what intense interest would they excite! Would not scholars travel to the ends of the earth to see Homer or Virgil; philosophers to see Plato, Socrates, Aristotle, or Bacon; poets to see Dante, Shakspeare, or Milton? And, coming from the world to the church, who that could command the means would not cross oceans and continents to see Abraham or Moses, Daniel or Isaiah, Paul or John, Luther or Cranmer? But what are any of these but stars of various magnitudes to the sun? Let any one ponder

the expression, the glorious appearance of our great God and Saviour! What a sublimity is in the idea! The manifestation of the Creator of the Universe; the manifestation of the Redeemer of a lost world; the manifestation of Him who unites in his one person the uncreated glories of the Godhead, and all the milder beauties of the perfect man! In that one ineffable manifestation, to have the controversies of all ages about the person of Christ settled beyond the possibility of doubt or dispute; to have it made plain to every mind that he is indeed the great God as well as our Saviour; to see thus before us in full robed majesty, for the confusion of his enemies, and the consolation of his friends, the God-man.

Such is the ultimate hope of the believer, and well might the apostle call it blessed, though that word but feebly expresses (for what can fully express it?) all the happiness which it even now imparts to those who indulge it, much less that which will be enjoyed when this long desired and expected good shall at length be realised, and the soul shall enjoy the full fruition of it.*

In connexion with the appearance of Christ, will be the resurrection of the dead. This also the pre-millenarians and the post-millenarians hold in common, though

* I again remark that I will not enter upon the controversy respecting the personal and visible reign of our Lord Jesus Christ on earth, during what is called the millennium. I am not, I confess, a believer in that opinion. And yet, when I consider how many of the most spiritual of God's children, and of the most devout and earnest students of the Scriptures, have embraced it, and see the consolation it gives to their hearts, and the life it imparts to their hopes, I am almost led to doubt whether I am not in error in rejecting the doctrine. But the conflicting hypotheses of those who have given themselves to the study of unful-

they differ as to the place of the saints' residence immediately after their resurrection, and as to many other particulars respecting their condition. It is probable that Christians dwell too little on this grand article of their belief, and are taken up too exclusively with the soul and its heavenly bliss. It is conceded that the body is an inferior part of our complex nature; but it is a part of it, and as truly the workmanship of God as the soul. It is the most exquisite material organisation in the universe, and an essential part of our nature. Man is not man without it. Christ died to redeem the body as well as the soul, and as the purchase of his blood, it has, on that account, a great value. It was formed to be a habitation, yea, a temple of the soul, and though smitten to ruin and desolation by death, it is to be rebuilt in a more glorious form at the resurrection. "Christ," says the apostle, "is Lord both of the dead and the living." He has established his throne upon the sepulchre, and stretched his sceptre over the domain of the King of Terrors, who is his vassal prince. He owns, watches, and guards the sleeping dust of his saints. Hence we may with comfort yield up in death not only our spirits, but our poor bodies, into his hands, and say with our poet,

filled and symbolical prophecies, the confutation which their most positive expositions of the meaning of prophetic Scripture have received, together with the fact that so many good people have now for so many years hourly expected the appearance spoken of by the apostle, have led me to conclude that the views of the millennarians have not the solid foundation which they seem to imagine. However, I most entirely concur with them in the opinion, that the second advent of Christ is the great object of christian hope; far more is said about it in the New Testament than about the believer's entrance into heaven at death.

"God, my Redeemer, lives,
And often from the skies
Looks down and watches all my dust,
Till he shall bid it rise."

And with equal comfort may we yield up the bodies of our friends to his keeping till the morning of the resurrection. Does not this strip the grave of part of its terrors, and invest the tomb with a kind of sanctity? It is not a prison where the body is incarcerated, but a chamber where it sleeps under the guardian care of its Redeemer. The apostle has said more about the body as a separate part of our nature than even about the soul. Who can read that wondrous chapter in the epistle to the Corinthians, a chapter which proves its own inspiration, without astonishment and delight? Whence, but from heaven, had this Jew such ideas, so far beyond all that Cicero ever knew, or Plato ever taught, or even Moses or Isaiah revealed?

With the heathen philosophers the resurrection of the body was thought to be not only impossible, but undesirable even if it were possible. They had a notion that matter as distinguished from spirit was essentially and incurably evil, and that, therefore, a resurrection would be a curse and not a blessing. Hence we find that when Paul preached this doctrine at Athens, the philosophers made him the object of their ridicule on this account. From his address to the Corinthian Church we learn that some of its members had fallen into this error, and considered that the resurrection signified not a material quickening of the dead body, but a spiritual quickening of a dead soul. Others of the first Christians held the same notion, as is evident from what he says of Hymenæus and Philetus. And the opinion is still professed, I be-

lieve, by the followers of Emmanuel Swedenborg. To confute this notion, or at any rate the general opinion that there is no resurrection of the dead, is the design of the elaborate and conclusive argument in the chapter to which I have just alluded: an argument which the apostle founded on the resurrection of Christ; stating that he lived, died, and rose again, not as a private, but as a public person, the representative of his people; so that if he rose, they will also rise. Their resurrection is involved in his. Hence he commences the chapter with, not only an assertion of Christ's resurrection, but a summary of the evidence of it.

How is it then that Christians do not more frequently dwell on this grand and delightful truth? One reason perhaps is its mysterious nature, and most mysterious it is: how a body, which at death is dissolved into its elements, and which may be again and again taken up to form grass, flowers, trees, fruits, the bodies of animals, yea, of other men, can be raised again, so as to be in any sense the same body, transcends all human conception; and yet it must be in some sense the same body, or its re-existence would be a creation, and not a resurrection. Yet it cannot be the same body, as regards its particles, for the body is ever in a state of change, and the body we now possess is not, as to the particles of which it is composed, the same as it was seven years ago; yet, as to identity, it is still the same body. What then will constitute its identity? No philosophy, no divinity can penetrate this mystery. The apostle, in answer to the cavil, "With what body do they come?" answers analogically by a reference to the grain sown, which dies before it rises into the blade and the ear. But

this was not so much intended to explain the mystery as to answer the supposed objection, "How can a dead body become a living one?" The thing seems an impossibility; "But look," says he, "at the grain of corn cast into the earth, is there not death before life there?" If you had never known or heard of the process of germination and vegetation, and had never seen the growth of a plant, would you not, when you saw the grain cast into the earth, and then decay, deem it altogether improbable that it would in any form ever rise out of the ground? Yet, says the apostle, this does take place, and this should remove all objections against the idea of the resurrection of a dead body. There is an analogy between the cases, though it is admitted that it is imperfect, and the objection in the one case might, but for experience, be urged in the other. The apostle does not draw a parallel between them, for they are not parallel. The whole of the grain does not die, there is a germ, which if the grain were deposited at a certain depth below the surface, and protected from the quickening influences of the soil and the elements, would live for thousands of years; but we know of no such living, indestructible germ in the human body which is preserved from the power of the last enemy. And then this resurrection of the grain is by slow degrees of vegetation, whereas the body is raised at once perfect and glorious. The argument is altogether of a popular character, and must not be pressed too far. The objection was, that the body died and returned to dust and could not rise again: Paul says, in reply, You may make the same objection to the grain that is sown, that dies also. The main body of the kernel dies. There

is no prospect that it will spring up itself. The analogy may be carried a little farther than this, and be intended also to set forth, as far as such an illustration can go, the greatness and beauty of the change that will take place in the body by the resurrection. Look at the blade of wheat; see it in all the elegance of its form; the jointed cylinder of its stem; the freshness of its verdure; the gracefulness of its blade; the richness of its ear and crown of berries; and compare all this with the grain from which it sprang when that grain is in a state of decay in the earth, and then see a faint emblem of the change to be made in our poor frail bodies by the resurrection.* Now consider what the apostle has said on this subject: "It is sown in corruption," even while alive it is subject to painful, loathsome, and wasting diseases; and when dead it falls under the process of putrefaction, and sinks into a state of dissolution and dust; but it is raised unsusceptible of pain, disease, decay, and disorganization. "It is sown in dishonour," corruption itself is dishonour; the body while living requires covering and concealment, to hide its deformities and defilements, and when dead, it is hurried off to the grave, as too offensive for the fondest eye to look upon; but it shall be "raised in glory," for the apostle tells us, "our citizenship is in heaven, from whence we look for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body (the body of our humiliation), by the mighty power whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself." Can the idea of glory itself be carried higher than to be like Christ? See him transfigured on Mount Tabor, when his face shone as the sun, and his raiment glittered with

* See Barnes.

a purity whiter than the snow, and he was one blaze of splendour. We are to be raised like that. "It is sown in weakness." In life it is feeble, soon weary, needing sleep food and medicine to keep it in working condition at all, often unfit for its occupation, pressed down first by infirmity and then by age, and at last worn out, unable to resist the approach of death, it drops into the grave: but it is "raised in power;" it shall be lifted above the frailties of humanity, and no longer be a clog, but wings, to the soul, needing no more sleep or food or renovating treatment, but nerved with the vigour of immortal youth, and capable of the service of God without weariness or languor. "It is sown a natural" or "animal body." It now possesses a lower physical life like the brute animals, has animal instincts, passions, propensities, and appetites, and thus symbolises with the inferior creatures; it is supported in the same manner, and is like them subject to the law of mortality, but it is "raised a spiritual body," from which the lower animal life will be extruded, and a new kind of physical existence introduced. It will still be a material body, but not an animal one. Its organic structure will be entirely changed. Some of its senses will probably be extinguished, some of its purest ones retained, such as sight and hearing (though how this can be without its present material organization is now a mystery); and other senses will be added, of which we can now have no more conception than the blind have of colours, or the deaf of sounds. In short, "this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality." Oh, the glorious sublimity, the mysterious magnificence, the rapturous incomprehensibility of these two words, in-

corruptibility and immortality, as applied to the body! We can enter but a little way into the poet's words,

> "My flesh shall slumber in the ground
> Till the last trumpet's dreadful sound;
> Then burst the chains with sweet surprise,
> And in my Saviour's image rise."

It is to this that the apostle's lofty language applies, where he says, "For we know that if the earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened, not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life." What an expression, "mortality swallowed up of life!" Our little, feeble, short-lived self, body and soul, absorbed in an ocean of life eternal. Nor ought we to consider as the exclusive object of our hope, our own resurrection apart from the resurrection of the whole redeemed family. At the coming of Christ, the reign of the King of Terrors will come to an end; the iron sceptre which he swayed for so many centuries will drop from his hand; he will be deposed from his throne; and he himself, the last enemy, shall be destroyed. Death itself shall die. Then shall come to pass the saying, "Death is swallowed up in victory." The countless hosts of believers of every age will come forth from their graves, and the living saints, in a moment, at the last trump, in the twinkling of an eye, will be changed, and the unimagined, unimaginable host shall ascend to meet the Lord in the air.

Such is the object of the Christian's hope, as regards the resurrection of the body. Faith may and does believe it. Hope may and does desire and expect

it; but imagination's utmost conception, its most adventurous and brilliant effort to realize it, dies away, and confesses the feebleness of its attempt. The wing of fancy, after a few fluttering attempts to rise, droops, and piety hears and obeys the voice which says, "Wait, and you shall see it."

In that day of consummation, that "bridal of the soul," the redeemed man will stand complete, glorified in body and soul, a fit inhabitant of a world of glory. How joyfully, exultingly, and triumphantly, will the happy spirit re-enter its material habitation, then transformed from a poor, dilapidated, mud-wall cottage, into a glorious mansion, a sacred temple, a royal residence, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens! O, what awaits this humanity of ours! How death and the grave lose their terrors in this glorious prospect! How wonderful that the world should not lose its power over us, through the superior attractions of this scene of transcendent and incomparable glory.

But more is yet to be told; and all may be summed up in that word of mysterious meaning, of unfathomable bliss, and of inconceivable glory, heaven. This is the expression and summation of all the believer hopes for beyond the grave. This is the word which sheds such a lustre on the page of the New Testament, and distinguishes it so illustriously from the Old. But where and what is it? Over one part of this question, the veil of silence is dropped by the hand of God, as it is over many other subjects; for "it is the glory of God to conceal a matter." "Many would have felt it a satisfaction had the Saviour, when he spoke of his Father's house with its many mansions, told us the

precise region of the family residence, so that looking out on the starry firmament we might have been able to fix on the sun, the moon, or some planet, and say, "Yonder it is; yonder is the world to which the spirits of my fathers have already gone, and to which I myself, ere long, am going." How delightful, we are ready to think, it would be to be able every day or every night, to look up and see the light of our Father's dwelling, just as a child in his journeying home from school can see his paternal home stand out conspicuously in the landscape. But this cannot be. It would not harmonise with the gospel scheme, which requires that from beginning to end we should walk by faith, and not by sight; while on earth, we are to see nothing but believe every thing; just as when we reach heaven, we shall see every thing, and merely believe nothing. No matter where heaven is, since we know what it is. Its locality is a small item in its bliss. We feel that now. The faithful wife would sooner dwell in a cottage with her loving husband, than in a palace separated from him. The affectionate child pines in a mansion for the home of his parents, though that may be a scene of comparative poverty. Locality has infinitely less to do with happiness on earth, than the domestic and social relationships, ties, and affections. Still, we doubt not, that even heaven's place will be a part of heaven's glories. God "is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city." There is perhaps something more than figure in the ravishing description of the New Jerusalem, in the two last chapters of the Revelation. Not that for a moment I contend that the description of that blaze of material splendour

should be taken literally. But it may still be considered as intimating, in some degree, the visible glory of the residence of the redeemed family.

But what is heaven? What, in turning the eye of hope to the future world, are we to desire and to expect? Here again, I say, God is silent about many things. "It does not yet appear what we shall be." Many subjects cannot be revealed. We might as well attempt to explain to an infant prince his future state and glory as the puissant monarch of a mighty empire, as to explain to a child of God on earth all his future honour and bliss in heaven. There are felicities and occupations for which we have no terms and no ideas. But how much is told us! Our Lord has summed it all up in that most sublime and comprehensive of all phrases, "Eternal Life!" everlasting existence, with all that can render it an eternal blessing. It is life, intellectual, physical, spiritual, social, in absolute perfection, and for ever. Such life, that compared with it, all we know of life here deserves the name of death, rather than life; life so full, so rich, so abundant, as to exclude all pain, all care, all fear, all gnawing hunger, all parching thirst, all wearisome labour; in short, the body and soul will be so free from even the least interruption of enjoyment, as that through eternity there will never be a moment when there shall not be a fulness of joy; when the happy immortal will not be able to say, "This is life." Even the very negatives ascribed to the heavenly state, seem to make a paradise of themselves. Knowing to our regret what, as regards our sins, our sorrows, and our cares, we now are, it is a part of our bliss to know that we shall not continue such for ever.

But let us now dwell upon the positive of heaven, and consider what we shall be. There is, perhaps, no term more frequently employed to set forth our future state than the word "glory." None could have been more appropriately selected. It signifies, when used to describe material objects, brightness, splendour, dazzling effulgence. Hence we apply it to the sun, or any unusually bright light in the heavens. It means the perfection of material manifestation; that which reveals all things, beautifies all things, perfects all things. In figurative language, it means honour, renown, that which renders any person or thing illustrious. So that when we find the deficiency of ordinary words to set forth any person, action, or thing, as great, grand, or transcendent, we speak of it as glorious. What then must heaven be, which is a state of unparalleled, perfect, infinite "glory!" This word, like the term "life," conveys a more impressive idea of our future state than a lengthened and laboured description would. The apostle sums up heaven in one place thus: "We rejoice in hope of the glory of God." This probably means not only the glory which God has prepared for us in all its details; but the direct perception and enjoyment which in heaven we shall have of God himself. The service, knowledge, and enjoyment of God, must form the loftiest employment of any creature's powers, however exalted he may be, and the richest bliss his heart can know. "To know God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent, is eternal life," not only the means of obtaining it, but its essential felicity. In this world how little we know of God, how much less we enjoy him! To every unconverted man, creation, instead of illustrating the Deity, has thrown a cloud of obscurity over him; and

even by the believer he is seen in dimness and disguise; so that almost all he can do while in this world is to long after him. But in heaven God will show himself personally to man; the thick veil will be lifted up; the intercepting barrier, now so opaque and impenetrable, will be removed. "Then shall the great Father of the universe stand revealed to the eye of his creatures rejoicing before him, when all that design and beauty by which this universe is enriched, shall beam in a direct flood of radiance from the original mind that evolved it into being; when the sight of infinite majesty shall be so tempered by the sight of infinite mercy, that the awe which else would overpower, will be sweetened by love, into a most calm, and solemn, and confiding reverence; and the whole family of heaven shall find it to be enough happiness for ever, that the glories of Divinity are visibly expanded to their view, and they are admitted into the high delights of ecstatic and ineffable communion with the living God."

But it may be asked, how will God reveal himself to the glorified inhabitants of heaven? "They shall see his face." Not that the essence of God can be seen any more in heaven than it is on earth. Jesus Christ will there be the image of the invisible God. We shall see him, and thus will be verified to us the words of the Saviour to Philip, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." We find this representation to have been adopted both by Christ and his apostles. "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me." Our Lord speaks of this vision as constituting the very substance of our heavenly felicity. This glory, however, does not refer exclusively

to his personal appearance, though it includes this; but also to the completion of his mediatorial work, to the state and majesty in which he dwells, to the homage which is paid him, to the infinite stores of wisdom, grace, and power which he possesses; to all he is, has done, and can do, to bless the universe. He prayed that his disciples might be brought to see the wonderful contrast presented by his heavenly condition, to his earthly one. They had seen him as the Man of Sorrows, and he desired they should behold him as the Lord of glory. He knew the love his true disciples bore to him, and that they could have no higher happiness than to be with him, and see his exaltation and honours, just as Joseph desired his brethren to tell his father of all his glory in Egypt, from a knowledge of the pleasure it would convey to his paternal heart. In the sublime visions of the Apocalypse, where heaven is opened to our view, it is Christ who is represented as the glory of the place, lighting up all countenances with joy, filling all hearts with gladness, and making all tongues vocal with praise. He is the sun of that blessed world, the orb of that nightless, cloudless, and eternal day. This was the heaven Paul longed for when he desired to depart, even to be with Christ. The one idea of being with Christ filled his soul, and he thought it enough. To be absent from the body, and present with the Lord, was the prevailing wish of his truly christian heart. With this he cheered the spirits of the Thessalonians weeping over the graves of departed relatives: "So shall we be ever with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words." How entirely this falls in with all our present ideas, both natural and spiritual. When our affection

is very strongly fixed upon any person, and our feelings are wrought up to a high pitch of intensity, it is the presence and converse of that person which constitutes our chief joy. Any where, and any how, with him is our earthly Paradise. We want no other company. To be alone with him is our desire. Does not the christian understand and feel all this in reference to Christ? Is he not now the object of his supreme regard? Are there not moments when he has such views of Christ's glory, such conceptions of his amazing mercy, such a sense of his love, such feelings of gratitude and affection, that he is ready to say, "If I feel all this now, through the power of faith, what must be the felicity of beholding his full-orbed glory, of gazing upon his face, and hearing his loving voice. I can conceive of no higher heaven, no more perfect paradise, than to be in the presence of Him who died for me upon the cross?" There is something wonderfully impressive, delightful, and unique in thus resolving the bliss of heaven into a particular state of mind, that state of mind being adoring and grateful love for a Being to whom we are indebted for redemption from infinite and eternal torment, to infinite and eternal bliss; and who in addition to these claims upon our gratitude demands our homage and admiration for his own infinite and eternal glories.

Among the felicities of heaven will be the spiritual perfection of our nature, the anticipation of which at times makes the Christian's heart to leap for joy. "We shall be like him," says the apostle, "for we shall see him as he is." Nothing that defiles or works abomination shall have any entrance into that state. Only perfect holiness can produce perfect happiness, and that

we shall have in heaven. The last stain will be effaced from our nature; the final stroke of absolute perfection will be given to our soul; the last requisite to the image of God in our spirit will be attained. We shall know the meaning, because we shall possess the reality, of that rapturous expression, "The spirits of just men made perfect." Cowper has strikingly expressed all this in one of his hymns:

"But though the poison lurks within,
Hope bids me still with patience wait
Till death shall set me free from sin,
Free from the only thing I hate.
Had I a throne above the rest,
Where angels and archangels dwell,
One sin unslain within my breast
Would make that heaven as dark as hell.
The pris'ner sent to breathe fresh air,
And blessed with liberty again,
Would mourn were he condemned to wear
One link of all his former chain.
But oh! no foe invades the bliss
When glory crowns the Christian's head,
One view of Jesus as he is
Will strike all sin for ever dead."

Nor must we omit as part of the object of christian hope, the society of heaven. Man is a social being. Solitude was not good for him even in Paradise, nor would it be good for him in heaven. Companionship seems wanting to every being in the universe, God alone excepted. How large a portion of our happiness now arises from friendship, fellowship, and converse! It will be so above. What attractions does heaven present on this ground! There will be the goodly fellowship of the prophets, the glorious company of the apostles, the noble army of martyrs; there, all the holy

men and women whose names shine with such splendour on the page of inspiration of the Old or of the New Testament; Abraham and Moses, David and Samuel, Paul and Peter, James and John; there, all that have adorned the pages of uninspired ecclesiastical history, the pious kings, the godly bishops, the zealous reformers, Luther and Melancthon, Calvin, and Cranmer, Knox and Zwingle; there, all the faithful ministers, Wesley, Whitfield, Scott, Chalmers, Hall, and Jay; there, the devoted missionaries, Schwartz, Brainerd, Morrison, Carey, Martyn, Vanderkemp; there, the palm-bearing multitude which no man can number, gathered out of every kindred, and tribe, and people, "which have washed their robes and made them white and clean in the blood of the Lamb:" all, all, sinlessly perfect, all with glorified bodies, exalted intellects, and stainless hearts: all freed from the infirmities which sometimes disturbed their communion with the saints upon earth, and by hard speeches and bitter controversies grieved each other's minds, and all now harmonised by perfect knowledge, perfect holiness, and perfect love. Oh, to be introduced to such society, to be one of them, to dwell with them, to maintain eternal converse with them! To be gathered together with them, and all to Christ! This is heaven, and what a heaven!

But are there no occupations in heaven? Is it a state of glorified indolence, of paradisaic voluptuous ease, where the immortal spirit, the inquisitive soul, yearning after knowledge and made for activity, will spend eternal ages lounging through the streets of the New Jerusalem, or dosing in dreamy repose on the banks of the river of life, and in the shadow of the tree of life? Nothing of the kind. Heaven is a busy

world, a place of universal activity, occupations worthy of glorified immortals will be found there. Now we know only in part; there we shall know every thing as we are known; knowledge is not only power, but bliss. It is that to the mind which water is to the thirsty palate; what it craves after when it has it not, and luxuriates in when it has it. The whole universe will be thrown open to our contemplation. Space, and the material universe, will be one vast library, and its countless millions of stars, so many volumes to read and study, in order to know the glories of creation. Providence, with all its vast machinery and complicated schemes, combining in its plan the history of the mightiest nations and the meanest individuals, and all manifesting the wisdom, power, and love of God, will form another department of study, where happy spirits will have mysteries solved, which baffled the loftiest intellects on earth; but the object of deepest interest, of profoundest research, and most delighted inquiry will be the sublimest of all God's works, the scheme of Redemption. The attraction of the cross will be felt in heaven. It will be seen to be the focal point of God's manifested glory. The connections, the bearings, the full and complete results of Christ's mediation, now so imperfectly known, will furnish a subject of study never to be exhausted, and a source of happiness which will ever satiate, but never surfeit. In heaven it is said, with beautiful simplicity, "His servants shall serve him," in what way, we cannot now say; but it will be an employment worthy of the place, the servant, and the Master.

And all this for ever. Eternity is the crown of heavenly glory. The greater the bliss of heaven is, the

more necessary to its full enjoyment does it seem that it should be eternal. To look from such felicity through the vista of millions of ages, and see at that distance a termination, would throw a damp on all our joys, a shadow on our brightest scenes. But amidst this rapturous and sublime festivity, to be able to say, "All this for ever;" that is heaven. A slight enjoyment, if eternal, rises into a vast magnitude; but the addition of eternity to infinitude, surpasses the conception of all except the omniscient intellect. And this is our portion, if we are Christians, "An inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away." It seems too vast for our possession. Its magnitude creates incredulity respecting it. To live as long as God lives! We are ready to say, "Can it be?" Yet it is: there is an eternity before us in which to grow in knowledge and bliss, and make approaches to attainments all but infinite, eternity to tower from height to height in glory, eternity to enjoy God and his works. How is it we think so little about it? How is it that such amazing joys do not create constant bliss? How is it we do not enter more deeply and more constantly into the apostle's expression, "We rejoice in hope of the glory of God?" Because our faith is so weak, our hope so languid, our time so occupied, and our attention so diverted from it, that we allow ourselves no leisure to meditate upon it.

CHAPTER V.

SALVATION BY HOPE.

SALVATION! What a word, and what a blessing! One word, but containing millions of ideas. It is the Bible, condensed into a single term. God's eternal councils; Christ's redeeming work; the Spirit's sanctifying power; all the riches of divine grace, and all the blessings of eternal glory, are in substance comprehended in those few syllables. That one word is a boundless, fathomless ocean of blessedness: like the love that originated the wondrous fruit of redeeming mercy, it passes knowledge. All that preachers have ever said; all that authors have ever written; all that Christians have ever felt, imagined, hoped for, in regard to salvation, leave its full meaning yet to be explained. It can be comprehended only in heaven; developed only in eternity.

This is in one sense a present blessing. We are now regenerated, justified, sanctified. We are now the children of God, and have "passed from death unto life." We that believe "have eternal life." The first fruits, the foretaste, and pledge of eternal salvation, are already granted to us, but the consummation, and the full possession of it is to come. Hence the apostle says, "We are saved by hope, but hope

that is seen is not hope, for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it." It is obvious that this means that a full salvation cannot be possessed in this world, but must be hoped for in the next. It is a future object, and must be waited for in holy desire, and patient expectation. Yet there seems also included, by necessity, the other idea, that hope keeps the believer steadfast in the pursuit of it, and persevering in the means necessary to its future possession; so that we are saved by hope. And indeed this is true, in even a still wider sense. Hope has much to do from beginning to end in obtaining our salvation. God's redeeming love, purpose, and plan, have made our world the region of hope. Earth is hope's territory, its only territory. It exists not in heaven, for there all is possession; nor in hell, for there all is despair. But here every man by the work of Christ is placed, so to speak, in a salvable state. By his very birth he is introduced into a world where he may hope for salvation through the atonement of Christ. Mercy bids him welcome to earth, smiles upon his cradle, and holds out her hand to his very childhood to conduct him to salvation. Hence he is to be reminded of this. Preachers are to tell him that he is within the reach of mercy, and urge him to use the means of salvation. We are commissioned to inform him that he is in a world between heaven and hell, and that he may escape from the one, and obtain the other; so that even before he has saving faith or true christian hope, we may awaken in his soul the desire and expectation of being saved. We are to tell him there is salvation provided for him. This is necessary before he can be induced to take a

step, or put forth an effort to possess himself of it. He must be addressed as a lost sinner, yet not beyond the reach of mercy; as a being going on to eternal existence beyond the grave, and who may be made a partaker of immortal bliss. It is this general desire and vague expectation, which may be called a rational hope, or rather the hope of a rational creature, as distinguished from the enlightened hope of the believer, that must be excited in the mind of man, and which can alone induce him to give earnest heed to the salvation of his soul. This vague and general hope cannot save him, but it may lead on to that which can. It has nothing holy in it, but it may end in that which has. It is not the product of saving faith, but it puts its possessor upon obtaining that faith.

If we can get men, even through their natural and instinctive regard to their own happiness, to hope for felicity beyond the grave, and prompt them to seek after it, however ignorant they may be at the time of the way of salvation, we have gained something. True, this is only an appeal to their self-love, but to what other principle can we appeal in the first instance? It seems to me the excellence of the gospel that it appeals first of all to man's natural instincts, for he has no spiritual ones before conversion. Is it not thus that God acts in all his invitations to unconverted sinners, and all his promises and threatenings? Yea, we are commanded to love our neighbour as ourselves. This self-love cannot be wrong, for surely our Lord could not intend to found a duty upon a sin. Self-love is not to be confounded with selfishness. The latter means an exclusive regard to our own happiness; self-love means a duly regulated regard to it. Selfishness is to be destroyed, self-

love only to be directed and controlled. The preacher of the gospel goes through the world as the herald of salvation, proclaiming glad tidings to all men, with the view of awakening, in the first instance, such a general and instinctive hope of salvation, as shall put them upon the means of obtaining it, and lead them to Christ, as its proper and only foundation. Thus the sinner is saved by hope, but only so far as this incipient and vague expectation puts him upon seeking it in earnest, and in God's way of bestowing it.

But neither conversion nor justification, when obtained, is the whole of salvation, nor are both together. Faith brings the soul back to the enjoyment of God's favour, but heaven, the final consummation of the work of grace, is also to be obtained; this completion of our salvation is yet to be reached. Hence the beautiful language of the apostle, when he says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively (living) hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away." We have a pilgrimage to pass through before we reach that city of habitation; a wilderness to traverse, privations to endure, difficulties to encounter, dangers to escape, and enemies to vanquish, before we set foot on the celestial Canaan. And how shall we reach that better, that heavenly country? I answer, "We are saved by hope." True it is we walk by faith, and are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation; but then faith is never complete without hope. Faith worketh by hope, as well as by love. And it will now be my business to show, not only that perseverance to the end is necessary, but, how

christian hope enables us to attain it. It calls out and sustains every grace and virtue, the exercise of which is necessary for the continuance of our christian course.

1. Fixed determined resolution is essential to our reaching the end of our faith, "the salvation of our souls." The apostle dwells on this with great frequency and fervour. The Christian's mind must be made up to this. His language must be in some such formula as the following: "My purpose is fixed, and nothing on earth shall shake it, to reach heaven at last. My plan is laid, and nothing shall alter it. I see that all the richest possessions on earth, every thing that can gratify taste, ambition, cupidity, or appetite, are but the small dust of the balance to me. I am for heaven. God helping me, no sacrifice, no self-denial, no hardship, no suffering, shall hold me back. I am resolutely surrendered, irrevocably committed, indissolubly bound, to that object. Ridicule shall not turn me aside; persecution shall not terrify me; wealth shall not seduce me; pleasure shall not allure me. I am for heaven, and none of these things attract or move me. I will forego every thing, and sacrifice every thing, that stands in the way of everlasting glory." Ah! what is it that is wanting in the great bulk of christian professors, but this absolute determination to reach heaven at last? How few of them have deliberately, determinedly, brought their minds to this intelligent, ever-operative purpose. How comparatively rare is the spectacle of a man, who seems to have heaven in his eye, his heart, his hope, as the great object of desire, pursuit, and expectation. Look at the conduct of professing Christians, and see how different it is from this. They have resolutions, but they are of the earth, earthly. They have

their fixed purposes, but they reach far below the skies; and their plans, but they appertain to the present world. Let no man deceive himself here, none will reach heaven but as the result of fixed, deliberate, practical, and persevering determination. And no man will come to this state of mind, but by hope. It is this alone, the view of heaven's glories, the expectation of eternal life, and some tolerably intimate acquaintance with it, that will lead to such an heroic resolution as I am now supposing. It must, indeed, be a hope of mighty power and impulse that will induce a man to surrender a whole life, and all that it contains, for the possession of its object.

2. Patience is another thing required to our perseverance unto the end. Indeed, the etymological meaning of the Greek word, rendered "patience," signifies "perseverance;" it is such a fortitude in the endurance of suffering as leads to "continuance in well doing." It has both a passive and an active meaning. Patience is the suffering virtue, the desire, the purpose, and the ability to endure with uncomplaining, unresisting meekness. This is a grace much more frequently called for in some states of the church than in others. In times of persecution, when the endurance of all kinds of painful inflictions is demanded, and bonds, imprisonment and death are likely to wear out the fortitude and steadfastness of the saints, then, in such circumstances as these, what can sustain the soul but patience, and what can sustain patience but hope? Only those who endure to the end, even amidst such sufferings as these, can be saved; and only those who are patient, can endure; and only those who are hopeful, can be patient. The apostle states this very appropriately, where he says, "Therefore

we both labour and suffer reproach, because we have trusted (or hoped, as it is in the original) in the living God."

3. Continued sanctification is necessary to our entrance into heaven. Neither justification, nor regeneration, nor both together, without sanctification, will take us to glory everlasting. It is true that the connexion of this latter with the two former is secured by God's sovereign purpose of mercy towards his people; yet this renders it not at all the less necessary to make it a matter of exhortation. The Christian should therefore be reminded that it is only those who persevere to the end in a way of faith and holiness who will be saved. It is at the peril of his soul, when in a state of declension or backsliding, that he carelessly and presumptuously exclaims, "Once in a state of grace, always in it." To abuse the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints to the indulgence of a frame of mind incompatible with the christian profession, is a sure sign of an unconverted state. He who can deliberately wander from the way of holy living, under the idea, and with the expectation, that he will be brought back again in God's time, may be very sure he never was in that way. We have need to be continually exhorted, to "watch and pray, lest we enter into temptation." The requirements of God's law are so large, the demands of Christ upon his followers are so extensive, their own profession is so comprehensive and so strict, and the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil, are so constant and so urgent, in one way or other, or from one quarter and another, that really it is a difficult matter to maintain that "holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." The christian life,

which is a life of inward and outward holiness, is a continued conflict, mortification, crucifixion. We are sternly called upon to pluck out a right eye, or cut off a right hand, and maintain, even in the most tranquil times, and without any self-invented, self-imposed, penances, a rigorous habit of self-denial. Many things which would gratify the flesh, the privation of which not only deprives us of what others enjoy, but exposes us to wonder, reproach, or ridicule, must be abstained from if we would be holy. And how shall we be able to adhere, in such circumstances, to the way of godliness? The fear of destruction may do something towards this. Our Lord bids his disciples "fear him who can destroy both body and soul in hell:" and in many other places the appeal is to our fear, in the way of warning. It is a perversion of the gospel system of love and mercy to say it excludes all fear. We know that the apostle has said, "Perfect love casteth out fear, for fear has torment." This latter expression explains and limits the former, and indicates that the only fear which love casts out, is that which hath torment, and that even this is not cast out but by perfect love. Still, I admit it is the hope of heaven and the love of God which are chiefly dwelt upon in the scriptures of the New Testament, as the means and motives of sanctification. This will be explained at large when I come to the chapter on hope as purifying.

4. Akin to this, and necessary for it, is watchfulness. If we would not be led into temptation, we must watch against it. There is scarcely any duty more frequently or more urgently enjoined upon us than this holy vigilance, and, therefore, none is more necessary. How impressively did our Lord enjoin this upon his disciples,

Mat. xxiv, xxv, xxvi. As we are ever surrounded by temptation, this follows of course. What soldier in an enemy's country, where every tree, every hedge, every wall may conceal a foe, in the very act of taking aim, and about to send the fatal bullet to his heart, would not keep constant watch on every object? This is precisely our situation and our duty. In one hour, and when not thinking of danger, much less apprehending it to be near, we may be brought into a trial of our faith and steadfastness which may seem to imperil our whole salvation. An unwatchful security may be our ruin. This was the cause of all the scandals we read of in Scripture. Eve was unwatchful when she listened to the tempter's wiles, and Adam when he hearkened to the persuasions of his wife, and they lost Paradise for themselves and their posterity. Noah was unwatchful when he drank the fruit of the vine and became intoxicated. Abraham was unwatchful when he lied to defend the chastity of his wife. David was unwatchful when he was walking on the house top, saw Bathsheba, and fell into the crimes of adultery and murder. Peter was unwatchful when he denied his Master with oaths and curses. And the failings of God's people in every age since are to be traced to the same negligence. Satan knows when we are off our watch tower, or asleep upon it, and takes instant advantage of our want of vigilance. He never slumbers if we do; and what is so likely to keep our eyes open, our vigilance eager, as hope? This is the ever wakeful sentinel of the soul. This, when vigorous and lively, is all eye, all ear, all hand, all foot. It sees the least object, hears the least noise, feels the least touch, snatches up its weapons, and hastens to the point of danger or advantage. It is ever waiting, ever

watchful, ever prepared for defence or assault. Thus intent upon the glorious object of our christian desire and expectation, we shall walk circumspectly, looking all around to see if any foe be near.

5. Can any rational creature, who reads the Word of God, expect to reach heaven without unwearied diligence? In how many passages of the New Testament is this enjoined upon us? One only need here be cited, "And besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue." This is repeated a few verses afterwards, "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure." Let the reader be attentive to the words of this exhortation. It not only enjoins diligence, but all diligence. And for what purpose? To practise a whole chain of virtues, each one of which requires the strength of Omnipotence to enable us to exercise it, thus to make our calling and election sure, sure to our entire conviction; so that we may walk onward in our christian career, with the blissful consciousness that we are elected and called to salvation. If diligence be necessary for anything, it is to obtain salvation; if it be successful in anything, it is in salvation; and if in anything it be rewarded, it is in salvation. The difficulties of the divine life are so great, numerous, and constant, that of all vain hopes of success in any undertaking, the vainest is that indulged by the man who expects to get to heaven without diligence. A tradesman surrounded by eager, skilful, and industrious competitors, who lies in bed till mid-day, may much more rationally expect to succeed, than he who anticipates the possession of heaven without constant, indomitable, and unwearied diligence. Let any one consider what are the duties to be performed, the

sacrifices to be made, the difficulties to be surmounted, the self-mortification to be exercised, the enemies to be encountered, the battles to be fought, the victories to be achieved, before salvation can be obtained, and then say if all this can be done without diligence. Everything incites to it. The conduct of God himself sets the example. The Pagan philosophers used to argue that the world must be eternal, otherwise, they said, the Deity would have been idle; ignorant as they were of his all-comprehending nature and his self-satisfying perfections. But inactivity is not incident to God; and if He be diligent, should not man? And if the chief diligence of God be about man's salvation, how much more diligent should man be about it also? It has been quaintly said by an old author, "that God built his temple on a threshing floor, to teach men industry and diligence;" alluding to the ground on Mount Moriah, which David purchased of Araunah, for the erection of an altar, after the pestilence was stayed. We cannot obtain any earthly good without labour, and can we expect to gain heaven without it? Alas, alas, how are even professors slackened in their pursuit of heavenly things by earthly ones! Oh, that we could see Christians working out their salvation with the same diligence that they are working in their worldly calling! We are told in the fable that when Jupiter had invited all living creatures to a banquet, the tortoise came in at the end of the feast; and upon being reproved for his dilatoriness, excused himself on the ground of the house which he carried upon his back, whereupon Jove adjudged him for ever to keep in his shell. Let us take care that when God calls us to the celestial banquet, we do not allow a house, or any personal, domestic, earthly concern, to

hinder us, lest all our happiness be confined to it. In the case of the poor tortoise, his impediment was put upon him by nature; ours is self-imposed. More than once we are exhorted by the apostle not to be slothful. Sloth is an inactive, drowsy, slumbering state of soul, the opposite of diligence. Such a disposition is hateful in everything, but most hateful and most surprising in regard to salvation. There is an animal in the zoological world called the sloth, whose habits render him the type of all that is lazy, inert, and torpid. He will occupy three days in climbing a tree, and fall asleep in the act. He scarcely ever moves but when compelled by hunger, and then rarely traverses more than fifty paces in a day. He utters a piteous cry, as if movement were distressful to him; and is held in such detestation, that even beasts of prey retire from him in disgust. With such an illustration of the nature of slothfulness, how forcibly the warning of the apostle against it comes to us, "Be not slothful." Instead of this the professing Christian should select as his emblem, the eagle, which, with unblinking eye and unwearied wing, soars with rapid and upward flight towards the sun: or rather, should seek to resemble the cherubic figures, concentrating in himself, and exhibiting in his conduct, in reference to salvation, the patient industry of the ox, the speed of the eagle, the courage of the lion, all directed by the intelligence of the man. And what can, or will, keep up such a diligent contemplation and pursuit of heavenly realities? There is but one thing that will do this, and that is Hope: and it will do it. The power of hope to inflame the human mind is always in exact proportion to the importance of its object, the probability of obtaining it, and the intensity of the desire to possess

it. And you will perceive its force, as a motive power, most of all when vigorously exercised in reference to salvation.

6. Spiritual joy has considerable power in maintaining our perseverance in the pursuit of salvation. "The joy of the Lord is his people's strength," to sustain them under, and carry them through, the trials, difficulties, and duties of the christian state. The more we have of joy and peace, the more we shall have of manly strength, robustness, and vigour. Dejection, despondency, and gloom enfeeble the mind in ordinary matters, and so they do in religious ones. Distress paralyses the arm of industry by eating out the power of the nerve of action. Hence the prayer of the apostle for the christian Romans, "The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost." It is of vast importance, not only for the believer's comfort, but for his safety, that this should be his case. He needs peace and joy, not only to make his duties delightful, but to retain his hold on religion altogether. The faith that yields no comfort to the soul, if it can be called faith, will soon be cast away as a worthless thing. A religion that does not bring bliss with it, will soon be likely to be found a hindrance to enjoyment. Professors neither feel nor exhibit the excellence of religion, if they do not "serve the Lord with gladness." We tell the world, in sermons and books, that the springs of happiness lie in true piety, and we should be careful to sustain the assertion by our appearance. We are commanded to let our light shine before men. To do this, we must let our holiness be irradiated by the sunshine of joy. A Christian is never gaining his re-

ligion its full credit, till he shows that it makes him not only a holy man, and an useful man, but also a happy one. The multitude all around him are saying, "Who will show us any good?" He should be able to say, "I will." "Lord, thou hast lifted upon me the light of thy countenance, and put gladness into my heart." Now it is hope that feeds joy. Hence the apostle's language, "Rejoicing in hope." "We rejoice in hope of the glory of God." The pleasures of hope have been, as I have already observed, the theme of poetry and song. It is, and must be, a happy state of mind. It is one of the passions, which, in their very exercise, are bliss. They not only bring it, but constitute it. A child desiring and expecting his toy, is, in so far as that goes, happy; happier, of course, when he has possession of it; but pleased even with his hope. If the salvation which is in Christ Jesus does not give joy, nothing can; and he who talks of heaven without "rejoicing in hope" of it, does but talk.

7. Hope gives a foretaste of heaven; and therefore we are saved by it. Salvation, as I have already showed, is a present blessing: "we are saved," and not merely "shall be." What was said to Zaccheus may be said to every repenting and believing sinner, "This day is salvation come to thine house." He who is not saved now, will not be hereafter. We know very well that salvation begun on earth will be completed in heaven. But heaven itself does begin on earth,

> "The men of grace have found
> Glory begun below;
> Celestial fruits on earthly ground
> From faith and hope may grow:"

and do grow. Grace is glory in the bud: glory is

grace in full bloom. Grace is glory militant: glory is grace triumphant. What other honours and felicities heaven will contain, than those we read of in the Bible as now promised to the Christian, we cannot conjecture: but there are none, and can be none, greater in kind than those we now possess, either of a relative or a personal nature. We can rise no higher in relationship, than to be a child of God; no higher in our moral state, than to be like God; no higher in our principles of action, than to love God and our neighbour; and no higher in happiness, than to enjoy God. And all these joys we have on earth. True, we have them only in such small proportions, in such glimpses, in such sips, and amidst so many interruptions, that we can form from them but a very inadequate idea of the heavenly glory. But they are the earnest of our redemption. And we might have a much richer earnest than we have. Others have had it. What a foretaste must John Howe have had, when one night he was in such a holy ecstacy in the view of heaven, that he said to his wife, "Though I love you as much as it is fit for one creature to love another, yet, if it were put to my choice, whether to die this moment or live this night, and by living this night I could secure to myself the continuance of this life for seven years longer, I should choose to die this moment." What a foretaste of heaven must Halyburton have enjoyed, when he had such a view and sense of the excellent glory, that he entreated God to cover that glory with his hand, lest it should overcome his power of endurance! What a prelude of the celestial banquet must Payson have had, when he wrote the following letter:

"Were I to adopt the figurative language of Bunyan I might date this letter from the land of Beulah, of which I have been for some weeks a happy inhabitant. The celestial city is full in my view. Its glories beam upon me, its breezes fan me, its odours are wafted to me, its sounds strike upon my ears, and its spirit is breathed into my heart. Nothing separates me from it but the river of death, which now appears but as an insignificant rill, that may be crossed at a single step, whenever God shall give permission. The Sun of Righteousness has been gradually drawing nearer and nearer, appearing larger and brighter as he approached; and now he fills the whole hemisphere, pouring forth a flood of glory, in which I seem to float like an insect in the beams of the sun, exulting, yet almost trembling, while I gaze on this excessive brightness, and wondering, with unutterable wonder, why God should deign thus to shine upon a sinful worm. A single heart and a single tongue seem altogether inadequate to my wants: I want a whole heart for every separate emotion, and a whole tongue to express that emotion.

"But why do I speak thus of myself and my feelings; why not speak only of our God and Redeemer? It is because I know not what to say. When I would speak of them my words are all swallowed up. I can only tell you what effects their presence produces, and even of these I can tell you but very little. O, my sister, my sister! could you but know what awaits the Christian; could you know only so much as I know, you could not refrain from rejoicing, and even leaping for joy. Labours, trials, troubles, would be nothing: you would rejoice in afflictions, and glory in tribu-

lations; and, like Paul and Silas, sing God's praises in the darkest night, and in the deepest dungeon. You have known a little of my trials and conflicts, and know that they have been neither few nor small; and I hope this glorious termination of them, will serve to strengthen your faith, and elevate your hope.

"And now my dear, dear sister, farewell. Hold on your christian course but a few days longer, and you will meet in heaven."

In these instances we see how much of heaven has been enjoyed on earth, by some of God's saints. And do not the biographies of others teach us the same fact? Yea, have there not been seasons, alas too few and too short, when we ourselves have known something of all this; when we too, have had such joy and peace in believing; such an impression of God's presence; such a sense of his love; such ardent affection for the Saviour, and such communion with him; such a holy serenity of mind; such an elevation above the world, as to lead us to say, Now I know something about heaven; what it is, and what it must be, when this frame of mind and heart is carried on to absolute perfection? It is hope that produces this. This passion, when intensely engaged, seems to give a present existence to its object, which then stands before the mind with almost the vividness of reality. Hope, in its highest exercises, is a kind of fruition. How important then is its exercise! How desirable to send it across the Jordan, like the spies into the promised land, to fetch the grapes of Eshcol, and thus to be encouraged to go on and take full possession of the heavenly country!

CHAPTER VI.

THE ASSURANCE OF HOPE.

How comes it to pass that so few professors of religion, and even so few true Christians enjoy and exhibit much of that joy and peace in believing, which the New Testament declares to be their privilege, and which, it might be supposed, their state and condition warrant and demand? That the great mass of professors do appear destitute of this spiritual delight is too notorious to be denied. In affliction are they not as disconsolate as other men? Do not their troubles put out the lights of their comfort and cause them to walk in darkness? In prosperity, how little of their happiness is derived from spiritual sources! The springs of their felicity lie in earthly, rather than in heavenly things. How rare is the case of one whose countenance is generally illuminated with a smile, and that smile the reflection of the beams of the Sun of Righteousness! How is this? Why is it that we do not let the light of our joy, as well as of our holiness, shine before men, and thus let our personal history point others to the fountain of bliss? Why? Because so many professing Christians, to allude to Bunyan's immortal allegory, are imprisoned in "Doubting Castle." How few are there who, if the question were proposed to them, "Are you assured you

are a child of God?" would answer even in this modest language, "I believe I am, and am happy in the delightful persuasion." The greater number would hesitate, and tell you plainly and at once, that they have their doubts and fears about the matter, and cannot really persuade themselves that such is their state. Ought this to be so? Ought a real Christian to be in constant, serious doubt whether he is a Christian? The change produced by the converting grace of God might be supposed, from its nature and greatness, to be its own evidence. It is a change in a man's whole moral nature, if it really exists. It is a change so accurately described in the Word of God, that any one who will deal honestly with himself, look into his own heart, consult his own consciousness, and compare himself with the Word of God, may know his state. The features of a child of God and of a child of the devil are not so like each other as to be hardly distinguished.

And as reason would lead us to conclude that the state of grace may be distinguished from the state of nature; the Scriptures every where assert that it may be, and suppose that it is. "We know that we have passed from death unto life," says the apostle, "because we love the brethren." And in a subsequent passage of the same epistle, the apostle says, "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life." Would it not appear strange if there were really no means of knowing that we had really become Christians? How could it be said God was "more abundantly willing that we should have strong consolation," if we could have no knowledge until we reached the heavenly country, that he had forgiven our sins and received us

into his favour? It is not only represented as possible that we may obtain this blessed knowledge now, but it is made our duty to seek it. "And we desire," says the apostle, "that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end." The state of mind here enjoined is not only hope, but the assurance of hope; not only the assurance, but the full assurance. This, observe, is not merely held out as a privilege, but enjoined as a duty; and not only a duty for some, but for every one; and a state not occasional, but habitual; not for a time, but "unto the end." This is in accordance with what another apostle enjoins, "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure." That is, sure to ourselves. Let it then be distinctly understood that assurance is not only the privilege of a few, but the duty of all. And yet how few enjoy it. Why is this?

Ignorance of its nature keeps many from it. Hence the necessity of explaining it. There are three kinds of assurance spoken of in the New Testament. "The full assurance of understanding." This means a clear, comprehensive, and soul-establishing acquaintance with divine truth. "The full assurance of faith." By this we are to understand a strong, settled, unwavering conviction of the truth of the gospel. "The full assurance of hope." These three are intimately connected with each other, and one rises out of the other. Here is first the clear understanding of the gospel, next the firm belief of what is so understood, and then the hope of what is believed; personal knowledge, personal belief, personal hope. And the reason why many do not possess the last, is that they do not clearly see, and

constantly remember, that it can be obtained only by the two former.

But what is the true nature of this assurance of hope? It must be distinctly borne in mind, that it is only the assurance of hope, not of possession. Let hope be as confident as it may, it is still but hope, and cannot have all the undoubting and absolute certainty of possession. The latter leaves no room for doubt or fear; the former may. By the state of mind indicated by the phrase I am now considering, it is therefore not meant that it consists in the Christian's being able to feel and to say, he is as certain of getting to heaven as if he were already there. It is not meant that he possesses such an absolute and undoubting certainty as admits of no degrees; much less a kind of boastful, ostentatious, and vain-glorious confidence of safety. It may be expressed thus: "The Word of God tells me that he that believes in Christ shall be saved; I am conscious that I have believed in Christ, and have thus committed my soul to him; therefore I believe my sins are forgiven, and I hope for eternal salvation. I have such a persuasion of the reality of my faith, therefore of the pardon of my sins and reconciliation to God, that I have no serious doubt of my being a child of God and an heir of glory." This I call assurance; such a persuasion of our having received the grace of God in our hearts, as excludes distressing doubts and fears. Still it is such a persuasion of our being true believers, as admits of degrees, for we find it so stated in the different passages which refer to it; we have "assurance," "full assurance," and "much full assurance;" clearly proving, I repeat, that the word imports a state of mind which admits of various degrees of intensity. Of the very persons who are represented as having

"much full assurance," the apostle says that their "faith grew exceedingly." But if assurance meant a state of mind that entirely and for ever excluded all doubt, how could it grow beyond full assurance? I therefore again say that the Scripture does not warrant us to describe it as going beyond a pleasing and satisfactory conclusion that we have passed from death unto life; which, after all, is very different from that certainty which accompanies possession. How else can we harmonise it with the exhortation to "work out our salvation with fear and trembling," or with the other admonition, "Fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of us should seem to come short of it." There is a wide difference between possessing a calm and comfortable enjoyment of this persuasion of true faith, and being forward to affirm it, and to glory in it, before others. A believer may be in the full possession of an inward, tranquil, and even joyful persuasion of his state before God, and of his safety for eternity; and yet not stand ready when the question, "Are you sure you are a child of God?" is put to him by a fellow creature, to reply with unhesitating boldness, "I am as sure of it, as if I heard a voice from heaven declare it." The right answer to such a question is the following: "I am a poor, sinful, guilty, lost creature; worthless, helpless, hopeless. But I believe the record God has given of his Son. On him, as the true and only foundation, I place all my hopes of eternal life, and I have therefore joy and peace in believing. Christ is my all. His finished work is the sole ground of my confidence. I think I am accepted of God. I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded he is able to keep that which I have com-

mitted to him against that day." This I consider scriptural assurance. It may fall short of the boast of some, but it accords best with the Word of God, and with the experience of God's saints in general. It is a knowledge that we have passed from death to life, though it is a knowledge which is less than the absolute and undoubting certainty which some enjoin upon us. This is a blessed state of mind, and much to be desired, for it is to have the one great question satisfactorily settled, and to be relieved from painful solicitude and distressing fear about our safety for eternity. What, compared with this, is it to have fears about our health, property, or liberty, or even our life, removed? How great, how pure the joy afforded by such a persuasion as this! "Yes, I trust I am a believer in Christ, a converted man, a child of God, an heir of glory, a traveller to heaven. I can say with unfaltering tongue, O God, thou art my God. Blessed Jesus, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee." O, what sunshine does such a persuasion throw over the landscape of life, illumining its barren wastes, and bringing out all the beauty, and verdure, and bloom of its Paradisaic spots. What privations or afflictions may we not endure when we can say, "God is my father, Christ my Saviour, salvation my portion, and heaven my home?" This has carried consolation into the darkest recesses of human woe, the lowest depths of poverty and want. With this, confessors have made the walls of their prison echo with their songs, and martyrs have been happy on the scaffold and at the stake. With this, we may live in happiness and die in peace. It is a jewel worth infinitely more than all the gems which have ever blazed on

beauty or royalty. The man who can rejoice in saying he is a Christian in reality, need not sigh over anything else that he is not.

Let us now consider how it is to be obtained. We shall never have it if we do not desire it. Surely if anything be desirable, it must, or ought to be, this. The absence of all solicitude about such a matter indicates either a total want, or a great weakness, of personal vital religion. That they who are altogether careless as to religion should never trouble themselves about the matter is natural enough, but that professors of religion should be indifferent to it, is indeed a marvel; and yet, I fear it is a subject about which the majority of them give themselves no concern. Ask them if they have any good ground to conclude they are the children of God, and are living in the happy persuasion that they are safe for eternity, and very many of them will tell you they really do not know, and say so with an air of levity which too plainly shows how little interest they take in religion altogether. Such persons may well doubt of their state; they have good reason to doubt of it. Indifference to the question, "Am I indeed a child of God?" is a sad and sure indication of an unchanged heart. But even good people are not so earnest about this matter as they ought to be. With them it is too generally left undecided, and in many cases because it is undesired. Is it not to be coveted that we should go on our way rejoicing to everlasting glory? Is it not desirable that, like Bunyan's Pilgrim, we should get out of Doubting Castle, and repose amidst the beauties of the Delectable Mountains of assurance?

Self-examination is essential to this blessed state of mind. "Examine yourselves," says the apostle,

"whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates." It is a matter of infinite and eternal importance that is at stake, the soul, and the soul's salvation. A mistake here is an appalling matter, an error that will require an eternity to understand, and an eternity to deplore. And the necessity for examination lies in the deceitfulness of the heart, in the liability of us all, and at all times, to false opinions of our state, and in the multitude that are thus deceived. We must therefore examine whether our faith be real or nominal; and we must also "prove ourselves." And this proof is to be obtained partly by looking into our hearts with an earnest, anxious research, and a comparison of their habitual state with the Word of God, and especially by making trial of our faith in its influence upon our lives.

It is of great consequence that we ever bear in mind that this assurance must be reached through the other two, the assurance of understanding and of faith, and will be in proportion to them. As is our knowledge of the gospel for clearness comprehensiveness and decision, so will be our faith. The hesitating doubting wavering faith of many arises from their dim and cloudy perception of divine truth. They do not see very clearly what they are to believe. The vague object is perceived like the outline of a coast seen from a great distance at sea, which can hardly be distinguished from a cloud, and consequently the belief that it is land is very feeble and fluctuating. Such, and such only, are the knowledge and faith of many real believers. They are not Bible students and proficients. It is impossible to found a confident expectation upon a feeble conviction;

it would be like attempting to build a castle upon a quicksand. Christ, salvation, heaven, and eternity, must all be firmly believed as great and glorious realities before they can become matters of personal and individual expectation. A strong faith must, of necessity, be followed by a lively hope. All attempts to reach this blessed state of mind, otherwise than through the previous stages, are like an effort to reach the top of the ladder without treading upon the intermediate steps.

It is apparent, then, that the assurance of hope is obtained in these two ways, by consciousness, and by examination. I am told in the Bible that every one who believes in Jesus Christ is pardoned, received to the favour of God, has a title to eternal life, and will be received up into glory. I am conscious I do believe. Knowing the acts of my own mind, I know that I have committed my soul into the hands of Christ for salvation. Still, as I have said, the heart is deceitful above all things, and as I am liable to have my judgment imposed upon by self-love, I must not trust to this consciousness alone, but must subject that to a test. As far as I know myself I am conscious of faith in Christ, but I will test that faith, and the hope which is founded upon it. How shall I do this? "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life." Consciousness therefore is not the only test, but what is written, that is, the Word of God. We are to bring ourselves to this touchstone, and say, "Do my faith and hope answer to that? Do I see in my heart, life, and character, the stamp of Scripture? Has this seal of the Spirit left its corresponding impression upon my soul?" Perhaps it will be said, this is an operose, tedious, and doubtful

method after all. But is it scriptural? This is evident by an appeal to the Bible. "We know," says the apostle, "we have passed from death unto life." How? By consciousness only? By revelation, impression, dream, or vision? No: "Because we love the brethren." We cannot know it without this; we may know by it. And I may remark in passing, that this love to the brethren is of itself, when rightly understood, a decisive proof of true christian piety. But what is this love? Not a love to those of our congregation, our denomination, our relations, but to all real Christians; for he who loves not all, does not love any as Christians: nor is it merely a love to them as containing many pleasing, amiable, and useful qualities; nor merely a love to the more lovely of them, but a love to even the more unattractive of them, and all this because God loves them; because they belong to him, and really love him; a love to them because they are holy, and bear God's image: a love that overleaps the barriers of sect, and party, and church, and nation, and that says, and feels what it says, "Show me a human being whom God loves, and that loves God and bears his image; and no matter the nation or the church to which he belongs; no matter the colour of his skin, or his rank in life; he may be a negro or a pauper; he may have some unlovely external aspects, but I own, I love, and I will help that man as a brother in Christ. I feel myself identified with him, and can say, and do feel what I say, 'Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.'" The man who can say this, is a Christian, and has the assurance of hope. Similar language we find in a subsequent chapter of the same epistle.

I am aware that a shorter and more direct manner

of arriving at this conclusion is contended for by some, who bring forward for this purpose the words of the apostle, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." The idea which many entertain of this witness is, that it is a direct and immediate suggestion or impression, and indeed revelation, to the individual who receives it, that his sins are pardoned, and that he has received a title to heaven. Now I think this a mistaken view of the apostle's meaning for the following reasons. In this revelation or impression there is nothing necessarily holy in its nature. An impression or revelation may be made to an unholy mind, as took place in the case of Balaam, and many others. Then, as a revelation from God, it would seem to require something to authenticate it as such. This view is also contrary to the other parts of God's Word, which represent the evidence of pardon, true personal godliness, and safety, to consist of what is practical in us. It seems calculated to lead to great delusion; for how liable should we be to confound such a direct revelation with the mere impression of our own minds. Many who profess to have received it, have, by their subsequent conduct, proved that they were deluded; while multitudes of those who are true Christians, are not conscious of any such testimony. Moreover, it is not in harmony with the context of the passage on which it is founded, which is entirely practical; the design of the apostle from the beginning of the chapter, being to show that holiness is the evidence of our being united to Christ by faith, and that the spirit of the gospel, as distinguished from the spirit of the law, is a spirit of adoption, and not of bondage. Now this spirit of adoption, or the spirit

of a child, is itself the witness of the Spirit. The spirit of a child is love, confidence, freedom: this is also the spirit of a child of God, and the production of it is the work of the Holy Ghost in the soul. Understand, then, that the witness of the Spirit is our possessing this filial disposition, which characterises every child of God. It has been well said, that in a true Christian's devout aspiration, it is not from instruction or habit, but from spontaneous impulse, that he exclaims, "Our Father." His thoughts go forth after God. His heart yearns for him. His soul longs with unutterable longings for his abiding presence. He comes with a truly filial spirit before God, and it is perfectly easy and natural for him to say, "Our Father." He is the child of God, and he does or may know it. Being the child of his Father, and away from his Father's house, he thinks of it with pleasure, and dwells with delight on his going home at last, and is sometimes homesick, as children that are kept at school away from their parents think of the day of the vacation, when they shall go home. These yearnings are the testimony of the Spirit that we are the children of God. The man who has these feelings habitually, need not hesitate to call himself a child of God. This is laid down in the Word as descriptive of the Spirit's work in the heart, and thus the conformity of the Spirit's work in the Word with his work in his soul being ascertained by the believer, he comes to the knowledge of his state. "The case," says Dr. Wardlaw, "stands thus: the Holy Spirit speaks in the Word. The same Spirit operates in the heart. There must be a correspondence between his testimony in the Word, and his operation in the heart. The evidence lies in this correspondence. We take the divine Word as

dictated by the Spirit, and containing a declaration of his mind; we see there what he testifies, we see especially the description which he gives of the faith and character of God's children; if 'our spirits,' in the court of conscience, and before the Father of our spirits, bear witness to a correspondence between this description and what has been effected in us by the Divine Agent, then there is a concurrence of the testimonies. The testimony of God's Spirit and the testimony of our spirits agree. The one witnesseth or evidenceth to the other. In proportion as we have the inward consciousness of this harmony do we possess the witness of the Spirit that we are the children of God."

"What," says Jonathan Edwards, "has led to the notion of a direct witness of the Spirit apart from this consciousness of conformity of his work in the heart, and with his testimony in the Word, is the word 'witness' of the Spirit? Hence they have taken it to be, not any work of the Spirit upon the heart giving evidence whence men may argue that they are the children of God, but an inward immediate suggestion, as though God invariably spoke to man and told him that he was his child, by a kind of secret voice or impression. The manner in which the word 'witness' or testimony is often used in the New Testament, is the holding forth of evidence from whence a thing may be argued and proved to be true, examples of which may be found in Heb. ii, 4; Acts xiv, 3; John v, 36, x, 25. When the Scripture speaks of the seal of the Spirit, which means the same as the witness, it is an expression which properly denotes not an immediate voice or suggestion, but some work or effect of the Spirit, left

as a divine mark upon the soul, to be an evidence by which God's children are to be known. When God sets his seal upon a man's heart by his Spirit, there is some holy stamp, some image impressed and left upon the heart by the Spirit, as by the seal upon the wax. This mark enstamped by the Spirit upon God's children is his own image, and this is the very thing which in Scripture is called the seal of the Spirit, and the witness or evidence of the Spirit."*

Still, I will not deny that there are seasons when the Spirit of God, by his gracious and sovereign illumination, shines in upon his own work in the soul, enabling the believer to recognise, with unusual clearness, his spiritual state as a child of God, assisting him to come to a more unhesitating, undoubting conclusion that he is going on to heaven, and will finally reach it through all opposition and difficulties. At such times God does come to him with his richest consolations, to be his own present witness in the believer's soul, to disperse his doubts, to dissipate his fears, and to assure his heart. Surely you who read this know something about it. There have been times when you felt these comforts in your soul, and burst forth into the exclamation, "I have found it, I have found it." God came to you; he soothed, softened, and persuaded your heart. Perhaps you were in your closet, observing a season of humiliation and prayer, or engaged in some difficult and self-denying service, or on a bed of sickness, or at the Lord's supper; still it was something more than mere impression, it was the Spirit shining upon his own work; bringing out in strong relief the characters he had impressed on the soul, and assisting

* Jonathan Edwards on the Religious Affections, vol. iv, p. 132.

you to say, with an unwavering tongue, "I am my beloved's, and he is mine."

A question, perhaps, will here be asked by some, whether this assurance may be obtained at the time of conversion, or must be waited for, and sought in the progress of sanctification. No doubt it may be, and in many cases is, the blessed privilege of some in the very first stage of their religious history. The Philippian jailor, no doubt, possessed it on the very night of his conversion. The three thousand converted on the day of Pentecost appear to have possessed it at the time of their reception of the gospel. They believed, rejoiced, and hoped. They were conscious they believed, and seem to have had no doubt of their faith. These, however, were sudden conversions, in one case from Paganism and the other from Judaism, in each of which the change was so great, so clear, and so decisive, that the consciousness of the internal renovation must have been all but absolute and undoubting certainty. And in many modern cases of sudden conversion, the same conclusive evidence must appear to the subjects of it. Such persons are too apt to suppose that all who really believe must as soon as they believe have a full assurance of both faith and hope; forgetful of the very slow steps by which many who have all their lives enjoyed gospel privileges, come to the persuasion that they have "the faith of God's elect." To affirm that every sinner, on his first believing apprehension of the gospel, must have this full assurance, this undoubting confidence, is to affirm that the discernment and faith of all believing sinners must, at the very outset, be the same, and that in all it must be perfect.* In very many cases, even

* See Wardlaw on Assurance, p. 146.

the assurance of faith is not attained till after long struggles with doubt, and long struggles after holiness; and till there be a settled consciousness of faith, there can be no assurance of hope.

I now take up another inquiry of great interest and importance. "How comes it to pass that so many professors do not possess this assurance?" Very many ought not to possess it. They have no right to it. They are better without it. In their case it would be sheer presumption and delusion. They are but nominal believers; yet even many of them, I am aware, have a vague and general persuasion of safety. They are professors, church members; have been admitted to the sacrament; have there received a certificate of personal piety, and conclude, without fear or care, that all is safe with them. Not only in the Church of Rome, but in all other churches established and unestablished, there are many who have not indeed the assurance of understanding, not the assurance of faith, not the assurance of hope in the scriptural meaning of the term, but a false assurance, the assurance of ignorance, of delusion, of profession. Theirs is but "the hope of the hypocrite, which will perish in the day when God taketh away his soul." The extreme worldliness of a large proportion of professors of all denominations, too clearly proves that their hearts cannot be right in the sight of God, that they are going on with their profession as a lie in their right hand, and with a confident expectation of heaven, which will end in the bitter anguish of disappointment; and thus, when they hope to awake up from the sleep of death in Paradise, they will lift up their eyes in the torments of the bottomless pit.

Among real Christians there is, as I have already

said, a lamentable degree of uncertainty about their spiritual state. Comparatively few are living in the happy persuasion of their eternal safety, and are comforted with the idea they are going to glory. Of these, some are too lukewarm and too worldly in the habitual frame of their minds, too partially sanctified in their temper and spirit, for their faith to be self-evident to their consciousness. There may be the root of the matter in them, the principle of faith, but it is so deeply covered over with obstructions, as not to be allowed to sprout; or so choked with thorns when it begins to grow, that its life can be scarcely discerned. The cares of business or of domestic life, the taste for luxurious ease and indulgence, the practice of worldly amusements, now too common among professors, wither and shrivel their piety. How can they, amid such circumstances, be assured of their eternal happiness. No wonder if when asked whether they really believe they are children of God, they shake their head and say they have no assurance. This heavenly exotic cannot grow in such soil and in such an atmosphere. They must have a stronger faith in things unseen and eternal; a faith that overcomes this world by the belief of another, before they can rejoice in an assured hope of life eternal. Doubts and fears are the weeds indigenous to the barren soil of lukewarm piety. These lukewarm professors almost make a merit of their doubts and fears, and by a most fatal delusion seem to think they offer amends for their want of spiritual religion by a spurious kind of humility. You will not unfrequently hear them say to more vigorous and happy Christians, "Ah, it is all very well for you to talk about assurance, though it seems almost presumptuous in you; but as

for me, I am content to go humbly to heaven, and shall think myself well off if I can get within the doors, just over the threshold. My language is

> 'A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,
> On thy kind arms I fall;
> Be thou my strength and righteousness,
> My Jesus and my all.'"

What, in many cases, is the meaning of all this? "I have so little religion and so much of the world mixed up with it, that I do not know whether I have any at all." It is the resort and refuge of the lukewarm, the careless, and the indolent: the piteous cry of the spiritual sloth. There are, I am aware, timid, yet spiritual minds to whom this will not apply; whose doubts and fears are the natural product of their physical organization, or their partial understanding of their privileges, and who shrink from this happy persuasion of safety as from unwarranted presumption. So did not the prophet Habakkuk when he said, "The Lord God is my strength, and he will make my feet as hind's feet, and he will make me to walk upon my high places." Christians should all seek, like the chamois upon the mountain bounding from height to height, to ascend the high places of christian experience, and go from one eminence of holy joy to another.

Ignorance, I repeat, of what assurance really means, is the cause why many do not enjoy it. They want, and suppose they are warranted to expect, a certainty of reaching heaven as undoubting as if they were within its gates. They hear many, in somewhat ostentatious language, boasting of this undoubting certainty, speaking as confidently as if they not only stood upon the threshold of heaven, but had passed through its gates. "If

this be assurance," say they, "I know nothing of it." They had better know nothing of it, for it savours of presumption. Toplady's expression is not borne out by Scripture, where when speaking of God's people he says, "More blessed but not more secure, the glorified spirits in heaven." This may be true in reference to the purpose of God, but not in reference to our feelings, for we are to work out our salvation with fear and trembling.

Diffidence keeps some from this state of mind. Diffidence, when nothing more than self-jealousy arising out of the knowledge of the heart's deceitfulness, is a salutary and proper condition of the soul. "Blessed is the man that feareth always." But the diffidence that keeps the soul from the enjoyment of its privileges, and also the performance of its duties, which holds it in despondency, and causes it to go sorrowing when it should go rejoicing, is a fault, yea, a sin. I know that it is an infinite and eternal matter that is at stake, that a mistake in such a concern is also an infinite and eternal mischief, and that many do mistake respecting it; but surely even these considerations should not hinder you from the enjoyment of assurance, if you are really conscious of the sincerity of your faith, and that consciousness is upheld by evidence of practical love of God. Do not deem this happy state of mind presumption in you. You are authorised, invited, yea, even commanded to indulge it. Be humble; for you ought to be so; but be joyful. See to it that you are building upon the only true foundation, which is Christ, and are adding to your faith virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly-kindness, and charity; and then look up, even with the consciousness of many imperfections and shortcomings, to the glory to

be revealed, and exultingly say, "It is mine." Do not be afraid of your privileges. Remember that the exercise of your affections towards Christ is not your justifying righteousness, but Christ himself: whom, though you love him sincerely, you can never love sufficiently.

There are many who profess to have this full assurance of hope. They are confident of their safety. I have no objection to this state of mind when it is well founded and properly expressed. When antinomianism was more prevalent than happily it now is, there was a spurious assurance amongst its professors which rested in a strong presumption of their election by God. They valued themselves on their supposed soundness in the doctrines of grace, and looked with supercilious contempt on those who really built their hope of salvation upon Christ, but did not go all lengths with them in their views of divine sovereignty in the salvation of sinners. They were loud in their boasts of being delivered from the bondage of slavish fears, of the certainty of their election, and of their reaching heaven at last. "They were pharisaical foes of pharisaism, uttering the spirit of the pharisee in the language of the publican, humbling themselves in words with a conscious self-elation at their humbling themselves so well. Whatever were their professions, they built their assurance, not on the rock of ages, but on a concealed part of self. There was no great difference between them and the legalists, whom they despised, and against whom they bitterly inveighed; those thought to gain heaven by doing, these by knowing, which they mistook for believing. They proposed to build their hopes upon Christ, but forgot that he must be a Christ believed in, loved, and obeyed, as well as talked of. They were so valiant for the truth that many of them contended for it at the tavern

and upon the ale bench." Happily, I say, this sect has sunk, but perhaps some near akin to it still remain, who need to be reminded that no assurance is of a right kind which does not make its possessor holy, instead of being worldly and careless about sin; humble, in opposition to pride; modest and retiring, instead of being ostentatious and obtrusive; loving and charitable, instead of being intolerant, censorious, and contemptuous.

Before I conclude this chapter, I would say a few words concerning that excessive solicitude about their spiritual state, and that constant exercise of introspection in which some really good people and spiritually-minded Christians indulge. They are too much like some dyspeptic patients who are distressingly nervous about their health. These persons are ever anxiously feeling their pulse, minutely watching their symptoms, and studiously consulting books on dietetics and disease. The least variation of their sensations occasions alarm, as if some mortal disease had just put forth a symptom of death. How much better, and how much more comfortable, would these self-distressed and often inert patients be, if, after having ascertained, (which by medical help they might do,) that they had no serious disease, they went forth into the active world, and gave their fears to the wind. There are nervous patients in the spiritual world as well as the natural one; good people, whose whole life nearly is spent in looking into their hearts, analysing their spiritual symptoms, and drawing hopeful or unfavourable conclusions concerning their eternal safety; now hoping, then fearing; to-day all cheerfulness, to-morrow all gloom; at one time, because a little more free and earnest in prayer, or happy in feeling, going on their way rejoicing, and, at another, journeying with down-

cast looks, because of supposed indifference and lukewarmness. Far be it from me to take off the attention of any one from "keeping the heart with all diligence," or abating one atom of that godly fear and jealousy which we ought all to maintain over ourselves, or letting down watchfulness, or slackening diligence; but surely having examined ourselves and come to a well-founded conclusion that we have passed from death unto life, our christian life ought not to be spent in this state of spiritual nervousness. I advise such sufferers to be looking more to Jesus, and less to themselves; to employ themselves in all the activities of the christian life, and they may be assured that exercise will as certainly promote the health of the soul as it does that of the body.*

* Many of the remarks of this chapter have already appeared in my former work, "The Course of Faith," in the chapter on "The Assurance of Faith." The repetition here was unavoidable; and in that work, as well as in this, I have borrowed some thoughts from Dr. Wardlaw's treatise.

CHAPTER VII.

THE AUTHOR OF CHRISTIAN HOPE.

"EVERY good and perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of Lights, with whom there is no variableness, neither the shadow of a turning." "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth." This is true of every temporal benefit. God is the fountain of all good, even of that which has reference to the body. All mercies must be traced to him as their true source. This is especially the case of all spiritual blessings. Their springs are all in heaven. The whole work of grace in the soul is God's doing. Regeneration contains enfolded in itself all the graces of the Spirit, just as all the parts of the plant are comprehended in the germ of the grain that is sown in the earth. But, as in the latter case, the fostering influence of the soil and the elements are necessary to bring out the blade and the ear, so God's grace in the conversion of the soul, which has given the seminal principle of all its various developments in sanctification, still carries on the process of the new creation. Each manifestation of spiritual life requires a separate and specific operation of divine power. We must look to God for each, and expect each from him. Faith is one gift of his hand, hope is another, love is

another, and so of all the graces that go to make up the christian character. We find that this accords exactly with our own experience. We do not in prayer merely ask for grace for the christian life as a whole, but for grace in each part of it. We often, through particular circumstances, feel ourselves in greater need of one virtue than another, and our errand to the throne is for special help with regard to that one virtue. And this applies to the gift of God which we are now considering; I mean hope. It is worthy of remark, that we know God more by what he is to us, than what he is in himself, more by his works than by his abstract nature; more, in short, by what he does, than by what he is. In himself he is not only an eternal truth, but an infinite mystery. Who, by searching, can find out God? How can the finite grasp the infinite? But is it not an approach to God and a step nearer in our conceptions of him, when he is revealed to us by his special operation in the production of individual Christian virtues? Thus as he is called "the God of peace," "the God of all consolation," he is also called "the God of hope." This cannot relate to what he is in his own nature, but what he is to us. He is the God of hope in every aspect of the case. He commands it, approves it, and is indeed the object of it, but the true meaning is, that he is the Author of it. The exercise of it in the soul of the believer is the work of his Spirit. It is by his grace not only that the principle of it is implanted in the soul, but that every exercise of it is called out. It is a part of his own working in us "to will and to do."

Christian hope, in its true meaning, is a great, a difficult, and, therefore, a rare thing. There is really very little of it in the world. If it means nothing more

than that loose, vague, cold, careless, and uninfluential expectation of some kind of happiness somewhere in a place called heaven, which most men, however worldly or wicked indulge, there is plenty of this, and no act of divine power is needed to produce it. This is easy enough and common enough. But such a desire and expectation of the eternal world is set forth in the Scriptures, as gives a kind of present reality to it, as keeps the soul diligent in all christian duties, patient under all trials, and holy amidst temptations; such a hope as subordinates earthly things to heavenly ones, and temporal matters to eternal ones; this is a state of mind too rarely found on earth, and wherever it is found, is always the work of divine grace. A man can no more rise to hope of this description without divine aid, than he can, by his own strength and effort, fly up to the clouds. The object of hope, when rightly understood, is so vast, so wonderful, so transcending all our conceptions, being immense, infinite, and eternal; we ourselves are so utterly unworthy of it; all our circumstances in this world of visibilities tend so entirely to draw away our attention from it, on account of its being altogether invisible and impalpable; so many things here demand and deserve our attention; so many appearances, if we were to judge only by sense, seem to render it probable that death is the end of us all, and so many believe it to be so; that really when we come to consider the matter deliberately and intelligently, we must at once be convinced that a settled practical hope of eternal life beyond the grave is not within the compass of man's unaided powers. To lift the soul above the predominant influence of things seen and temporal, and bring it within the attraction of things unseen and eternal, is the work

of Omnipotence alone. Hence it is said, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to a lively (living) hope." And he who begins the work of hope must carry it on. God, in conversion, gives no stock of grace that renders us independent of him for sanctification, nor does he in giving us any particular religious principle, give us strength sufficient for all future exercises of it. There is no clock-work mechanism in religion, which, being wound up and set a going, may be left to itself to work on. Whatever of general laws there may be in either the natural or spiritual world, it is still true of both, that in him we not only live, but move, and have our being.

This is full of instruction, admonition, and consolation to the real Christian. It teaches him his dependance upon God for this, as well as for every other part of the christian character. It shews him where to look, where to go, and what to do, in order to maintain this delightful state of soul. It is well to become most intimately acquainted with all that stands connected both with our safety and comfort in the divine life. Let the believer who is anxious, not only to maintain, but to strengthen, his desires and expectations of eternal glory, never forget that in this, as in every other respect, he is just what divine grace makes him. Let him beware of thinking he is equal to this, or anything else that is good, of himself. It is a dangerous thing to suppose that anything spiritual is easy, and to lose sight for a moment of our need of divine help. But this is not only instructive, but admonitory. If every exercise of hope be performed by a divine power working in us,

how constant, earnest, and believing should be our prayers for divine grace to assist us! What a subject for prayer is christian hope! How necessary it is for our sanctification and consolation! What a motive this to prayer! Let us make this a special subject of believing supplication. Have we done this? Are we doing it? Are we not too general in our petitions at the throne of grace? Do we analyse the one generic subject of religion, and resolve it into its specific and various parts of faith, hope, and love, and make each by itself a separate object of desire and subject of prayer? Do we at one time dwell specially upon belief, and, with an enlargement of soul, pray, "Lord, increase my faith?" Do we at another dwell upon hope, and pray that we may "abound in this grace also?" Do we, at a third time, expatiate in our supplications upon love, and entreat that we may "increase more and more in this, in knowledge, and in all judgment?" If we are to observe the apostle's order and method of prayer for the churches, this was his way of procedure. Did he not pray, in reference to the graces we are now considering, that the believing Romans might abound in hope? Were we as much in earnest as we should be, we should be far more particular in regard to our soul's concerns than we are; we should descend more to detail, and attend more to the several parts of religion; we should exercise our care for our souls as we do for our bodies. In reference to the latter, we do not think it enough to attend to the general state of our health, and keep up the tone of our constitution, though this is very important, but we descend to a minute inspection and care of every part of every limb, every organ, every function; we consider which is weak and needs strengthening;

which is diseased and requires remedy. Let us then be much in prayer to God for an increase of hope. And how consolatory it is to know that God is both able and willing to bestow it upon us. Why is he called "the God of hope," but to encourage our prayers? That he is thus set before us, is of itself a sweet invitation, a blessed attraction, gently constraining our spirits to activity. Believer, he is "the God of hope." That is one of his peculiar titles. He is "waiting to be gracious." He is glorified in bestowing this grace. He can, and will, if you ask him, fill you with hope even to the full assurance. It is your own fault if you are not "rejoicing in hope." There is no obstacle but your own unbelief. You are straitened in yourself, not in him. He can "do above all you ask or think." Try him. You never have yet done this as you should. You have not perhaps wanted to abound in this grace; you are contented with the scanty measure you have; or you are in doubt and unbelief, and are ready to imagine you can never rise above your present low level. Cast away such unworthy ideas, and go to God strong in faith to be made more earnest in your desire, and more confident in your expectations of it, and you will be astonished at your success.

CHAPTER VIII.

HOPE THE ANCHOR OF THE SOUL.

This figure of speech, which is a very instructive and impressive one, is found in a passage of Holy Writ, as striking, perhaps, in some respects, as any that can be found in the Bible. "Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the vail." Such is the cable, if I may so speak, strong and infrangible, to which the anchor is fixed. This passage is so rich in all that can confort the heart of the believer, that before I come to the particular portion of it which is the subject of this chapter, I may glance at its general contents.

The persons for whom this wonderful passage is intended, are described by two particulars, as "The heirs of promise." This refers to the promise made to Abraham of the Messiah, "in whom all the families of the earth are to be blessed," a promise which comprehends in itself all the blessings of the New Covenant.

Of this vast possession every true believer is an heir. Under each and every one of the covenanted blessings, he may write, "mine;" all those promises which are "exceeding great and precious," which are "yea and amen in Christ Jesus," are his own, to be appropriated as occasion may require. How rich, how vast, how inexhaustible a possession! Such a man need not envy the heir to a peerage or a throne. But the believer is also described as one who has "fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before him." In this there is an allusion to the man-slayer, who had unintentionally slain a fellow-creature, and had betaken himself to the city of refuge provided by the law of Moses, where he was safe from the avenger of blood. Thus the believer has fled to Christ our hope, and is safe in him from the sword of divine justice. Safe in Christ! Oh, what ineffable peace does that thought afford! Safe as Noah in the ark, when the deluge was rising and roaring around.

And what does the passage say of these happy people? Why that "God is more abundantly willing that they should have," what? Salvation? Yes, but more than that, "strong consolation!" Not only the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory, but consolation on the way to it, a happy home at the end of the journey, and a happy journey to it. There is a fulness and richness of expression here which is surprising. The text speaks not only of consolation, but strong consolation. Not only that God is "willing" they should be consoled, but "abundantly willing," yea, "more abundantly willing." It is delightful to dwell on this duplication and re-duplication of terms, this heaping of expression upon expression, to show how intent God is,

not merely upon the happiness of his people in heaven, but their comfort upon earth. He is not willing they should go sorrowing and downcast to glory, but that they should go on their way rejoicing, yea, "with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads;" that they should go singing to their crowns. A gloomy, dejected, depressed believer is acting in opposition to God's intention. Wherefore lift up the hands that hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees. Take your harp from the willows, sorrowful men. You may "sing the Lord's song in a strange land," for you are on your way out of it. You have Canaan's goodly country in view. Let the joy of the Lord be your strength.

And what has God done to furnish and promote this consolation? What has he not done? What has he left undone? The apostle tells us of "the immutability of God's counsel." What counsel? His counsel about our salvation. This word "counsel," applied to man, means conference between different persons, deliberation, decision guided by, and based upon, patient consideration. But with whom "did God take counsel, who instructed him and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and shewed to him the way of understanding?" If the word mean anything more than infallible wisdom and action which is the result of Omniscience, it can refer only to that same mysterious conference of which the historian of man's fall speaks, where God is represented as saying, "Let us make man in our image." Everything God does is the effect of counsel with himself. Everything in nature, and in providence, and especially in grace, is wisely done, it is all right, good, best, all the effect of counsel. This counsel means his fixed, wise, and benevolent purpose to

save all who believe the gospel. What if this purpose, like the plans and purposes of man, could be changed? Why then, the heavens might be clothed in sackcloth, and the earth in mourning. Then we might call on universal nature to become vocal, and utter one loud, deep groan. But what says God? "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee." If God changed his plans; if he were controlled by caprice; if he willed one thing to-day, and another thing to-morrow, who could confide in him, or have any hope of heaven? If he could change in his purpose and his plans, we could at best possess only a trembling and uncertain expectation of eternal life. We could only say, that it was possible or probable we might be saved, but there could be no certainty of it. Not only could there be no strong consolation, but no consolation at all. Every thing therefore depends upon the divine immutability. Hence his own glorious declaration, "I, the Lord, change not:" and hence also the apostle's beautiful description of God, as "The Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, nor shadow of change." Believer, is not this "strong consolation?" You have scarcely any thing certain but your salvation; and that is certain. God has purposed it, planned it, promised it; and He cannot change. Lift up your eyes to yon snow-crowned mountain; lift them higher still to that blazing sun; higher still to those fixed stars, and you may sooner expect all these to change, and to sink again into the nothing from which the Creator called them forth, than God's purpose to change, and your salvation, if you are

a true Christian, to fail. Let us luxuriate in the idea that amidst all the mutabilities of earth and time, all the vicissitudes of human affairs, (and what is humanity in all its range of events but one endless series of changes), still there is one Being who is unchangeable, and that is God; one event that is certain, and that is salvation. The immutability of God is the crowning glory of his character; for what would be all the other glories, if it were possible they could change? This is equally the bliss of angels and of men; is no less the guarantee of the hopes of the former than of the latter. Christian, hear then with rapture, what God says, "I, the Lord, change not;" and let that one attribute of Deity be the joy of your heart, and make a separate song of that glorious word, immutability.

But this is not all, for the passage I am considering speaks of our "strong consolation" established by two immutable things. And what are those? The promise and the oath of God.

> "His very word of grace is strong
> As that which built the skies;
> The voice that rolls the stars along
> Spake all the promises."

"Give me your word of promise," I say to a man of known and tried veracity, "and it is as good as your bond." But still his falsehood is possible, though improbable. But it is "impossible for God to lie." His infinite holiness places lying beyond his capability; under every promise we can write, "True, eternally, unalterably true." Why, then, has he added his oath? This is a surprising view of God and God's doings. Jehovah is brought before us, in the solemn act of making oath. But to whom shall he appeal; whom

shall he call to witness the truth of his affirmation? "Because he can swear by no greater, he swears by himself." But why, I repeat, this wondrous transaction? Why treat his promise, as if it required for its credibility the guarantee of an oath? Why thus add immutability to immutability? The apostle answers the question: "An oath for confirmation is the end of all strife." In the intercourse of society, and in the transactions of business, an oath is considered, on account of its solemn appeal to heaven, and its implied imprecation of divine vengeance upon falsehood, an additional ground of confidence, because an additional pledge of veracity. And it is in allusion to this, that God, with infinite condescension to our weakness, adopts our own forms, and adds his oath to his promise, that "by two immutable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us." He knows what suspicious, timid, fearful and desponding creatures we are; how powerful our unbelief is, and how weak our faith is; how apt we are to carry our doubts of the veracity of our fellow-creatures into our intercourse with Him; and in pity to our weakness, he adopts our customs, takes up the bonds by which we guard veracity, and "swears" as well as "promises," that he will save all that believe in Christ. Oh Christian, stand amazed at God's condescension and kindness, and blush for thy unbelief and thy cheerlessness, and enter into the enjoyment of a strong consolation: and in order to that, enter upon the exercise of a strong faith.

I now take up the subject of this chapter, which is, hope considered as the anchor of the soul. Some have thought there is an appearance of unnaturalness in the

apostle's representation of an anchor, "entering within the veil whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus." But in fact he does not so represent it. It is only hope that enters heaven, not the anchor. True this affection is compared to an anchor, but the metaphor is immediately dropped, and is not intended to be carried to the end of the sentence.*

The apostle, in the former expression, "The hope set before us," speaks of hope objectively; in the latter, subjectively. As the language is a metaphor, shall I be thought wanting in good taste, if I carry on the figure? I am not prone to this species of composition, and severely condemn it, when applied to Scripture in the way of fanciful interpretation, and when introduced to the pulpit as a means of popularity. Still, we have scriptural authority for its occasional use. Where the apostle represents the christian life as a conflict, he carries out the first metaphor by an allegory, or at any rate, a consecutive series of metaphors, into details of offensive and defensive warfare. And now, when he

* A similar criticism may be made upon another figurative passage: "For the Word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." It is asked, is there not a confused metaphor here, or, how can it be conceived that the word of God can act upon the body, and sever its parts? The apostle supposes no such thing. His design is to represent the sharp and penetrating power of christian truth, and he likens it to the power of a sword, which in its operation, when thrust into the body, separates the soul, that is the physical life from the spirit or immaterial part of our nature, and reaches the very bones and the marrow they contain. These are the qualities of the metaphor or sign, but not of the thing signified. The word is like a sharp sword which thus operates in the hand of him that holds it.

speaks of an anchor, may I not innocently, yet briefly, advert to all that is implied by the figure? An anchor supposes a ship, a ship a voyage, a voyage an ocean, an ocean a haven of destination, and several other particulars. Is not human life often called a voyage, and do we not often speak of embarking on the troubled ocean of human affairs? Upon that ocean, viewed now as lying between earth and heaven, the believer launches his noble ship to pursue her heaven-bound course. This ocean, like every other, is subject to restless and ever changing tides, is exposed to storms, and is beset with rocks and quicksands . Amidst winds and waves the Christian's vessel ploughs the deep. Precious beyond all estimate is the freight it bears. What was the wealth of the ancient galleons bearing home the treasures of the east, or of our modern steamers laden with the produce of auriferous regions, compared with that which is contained in one human soul? Were all the jewels yet hidden in the veins of the earth, as well as all that are in the possession of men above it, with all the gold Omnipotence ever created, embarked on board the mammoth vessel now preparing, and were the ship, with its cargo of incalculable value, to sink to the bottom of the ocean, it would be a trifling calamity compared with the loss of one human soul; for he who made the soul and the world too, and knows well the comparative value of both, said, "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" Such is the treasure on board each vessel that sails on the ocean lying between earth and heaven, between time and eternity. What a shipwreck is the loss of a soul! Is there not danger of it? Is not the shore strewed with wrecks, and are not fragments

of broken vessels ever to be seen floating on the surface of the waves? And what is the chart by which the mariner is to be guided in his course? The Word of God. This chart is well drawn by the pen of inspiration. There can be no false soundings or layings down here; no omissions of rocks, shoals, or quicksands; no want of land marks and beacons. All that is necessary to ensure a safe voyage is explicitly indicated. None that consult and follow this can run upon an unknown peril. Do you ask for the compass? It is the cross of Christ. He that keeps the eye of faith steadily fixed on that, and steers by it, will never go out of his course. Does the wise mariner, approaching a dangerous coast and entering upon a difficult navigagation, trust to his own knowledge, and his own soundings? No. He signals for a pilot, and gives up to him the helm and guidance of the ship; and will not the christian mariner trust to the pilotage and guidance of him who calmed the winds and the waves of the sea of Tiberias? Will he not, should he not, give up his whole soul into the hands of Jehovah Jesus? Yes, and in the storm and tempest sing, with the poet,

"Begone unbelief, my Saviour is near,
And for my relief will surely appear;
By prayer let me wrestle, and he will perform;
With Christ in the vessel, I smile at the storm."

And then the haven, the destined port, the wished for home, what is that? The Paradise of God: yes, that is the peaceful haven to which the holy voyager to eternity is directing his course, and steering his vessel; which is descried by faith, and longed for by hope, and is ever seen inviting us to retire from the tossings and

perils of this unquiet ocean to a sacred enclosure, a sequestered spot, which the storms and tempests of the world are not permitted to invade.

But let me now consider the anchor and its uses, and see how far these apply to the grace of christian hope.

An anchor is of use both in a calm and a storm. When a captain intends and desires his ship to remain near the shore, and especially in a bay, or any exposed situation where the tide runs strong, and there is a somewhat dangerous roadstead, he takes great care to secure, if possible, a good anchorage, and the anchor is immediately dropped to prevent the ship from being drifted ashore by the tide, which, without this precaution, would inevitably be the case when the tide is flowing. Vessels, therefore, without an anchor, would be stranded in a calm as well as wrecked in a storm. So it is in the christian life. There also is the tide setting in, and oh, how strongly, upon the shores of earth. The world is indeed a dangerous foe to grace. To very, very many it is the most destructive one. They are not so likely to be subdued by vice as by worldly-mindedness. It would not, I know, be safe to say of any who are yet in the flesh, however strong in virtue, that immorality is impossible with them, but we may say of multitudes, that it is in the last degree improbable. All may see just reason to say, "Keep back thy servant from presumptuous sins," for Satan, the tempter, has no respect for age, experience, office, rank, or sex, and would be glad to catch in the toils of vice the old and saintly, as well as the young, professor. Yet it is not thus that he attempts to ruin the great

majority of souls; it is by worldly-mindedness, by which I mean a predominant and all but supreme and exclusive regard to "things seen and temporal."

There are two or three things which, in setting forth this subject, must be taken into consideration, such as that God in Christ is the supreme object of a true Christian's love, the chief source of his felicity, the highest end of life. The salvation of his soul is the first object of his desire, pursuit, and expectation. The chief end of man, and man's abode on earth, is to glorify God here, and enjoy him for ever. Our great business on earth is to meeten for heaven, and our main concern in time is to prepare for eternity. Can either of these postulates be denied? If not, let them be well pondered. Let the judgment, heart, will, and conscience, be all summoned to devout meditation upon them, and then let us say how, in what manner, and to what degree, the world ought to be regarded by us. No object, however lawful in itself, however pure, innocent, or commendable, may be regarded in a way that is incompatible with these acknowledged principles. "If any man love the world," says the apostle, in a passage which ought to ring through all Christendom, and make the ears of millions tingle, and their hearts palpitate with fear and alarm, "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." What is the world? not merely sin, vice, profligacy, idolatry, infidelity, heresy; oh no, the world comprises besides the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life, many things more decent, more innocent, more rational, more commendable than these vile objects. Every thing on earth, however fair, laudable, and excellent in itself, every thing besides God, is the

world. Your business is the world, your family is the world, your house and comfortable home are the world, the wife of your bosom, the children whom God has given you are the world. "What! then," you exclaim, "are we not to love them?" Yes, in proper degrees, but not more than God. You are not to seek from them your highest happiness. You are not to be more solicitous to secure them than heaven. It is of the supreme love the apostle speaks. How plain is this from our Lord's exposition and summary of the law, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy mind, and soul, and strength." How still more explicit from the other words of Christ, "He that loveth father or mother, son or daughter, more than me, is not worthy of me." Christian professors, there is need to have these awful, yet righteous demands sent with a voice of thunder into your places of business and scenes of domestic comfort. You have need to be told that all this engrossing solicitude about business, all this eager haste to be rich, all this ambition to add house to house, and field to field, all this taste for elegance, show, and fashion, all this competition for rank, station, office, and publicity, which lead to neglect of salvation, to departure from God, to indifference to heaven, is that love of the world which is incompatible with the love of the Father; and not less so that taste for fashionable amusements, that supreme and exclusive anxiety about comfort and luxury, or even that more refined and simple love of home-bred delights, which still leaves out God, salvation, heaven, and eternity. Here, here, I repeat, is your peril. Here the enemy with which you have to do battle. It is not vice, I say, it is not profligacy, it is worldly-mindedness. "They mind earthly things,"

said the apostle, when speaking of the enemies of the cross of Christ. On the other hand, when speaking of the temper of his friends and followers, he says, "We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen, for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal." The Christians of early days appear to have done all things with an eye to heaven and eternity; "their buying and selling, marrying and giving in marriage; their weepings and rejoicings, were all measured, and checked, and subdued by the remembrance that the time is short, and that the fashion of this world passeth away. They had subdued the world by faith, and so lived as they would desire to be found by him at his coming." There was a two-fold process ever going on within them, the daily increasing energy of their spiritual life, and the fixed contemplation of Christ's second coming. The ever-present consciousness of their Master's nearness was like some deep under-tone which runs through a strain of music, and gives it a staid and solemn character. Ah, how different is it with professors now! Do we not see them throwing themselves wholly, body soul and spirit, into their trade, into the cherished objects of their ambition, into their entire devotedness to a worldly life. In these things, and for them, they live; these things bind round and overgrow their hearts, and stifle all holy thoughts, and smother all heavenly desires. They have no other energy of hope and fear, and neither look nor wait for anything beyond. The great future has no power over them, the high heaven no fascinations to attract them; they are too far off, too dimly seen, and too unsubstantial, to counterpoise the gain of to-day or the pleasures of to-morrow. The

road that leads to destruction is broad enough to comprise many parallel paths in it, and there is one crowded with professors of religion, walking in company, in elegant attire, with cheerful mien, and elastic step, but still walking to perdition. Oh, yes, there is a way through the church, a decent, flowery, down-hill way to eternal destruction, and many there be that take that road. And even where worldliness is not so predominant and exclusive as this, yet it is far too prevailing with a multitude of professors. It is the sin of the age, and has deeply infected the church of Christ. While many are sunk in the mire, and are sure to perish in their worldly sins, multitudes more are sadly bespattered and have their feet so laden with thick clay, as to render their progress slow, and their perseverance doubtful. The watchmen on the walls and towers of Zion had need to sound their loudest voices of alarm against this destructive foe, and tell the luxurious and slumbering inhabitants of the city that a mighty foe is at the gates, or rather has already made his entrance. This soft effeminacy, this Sybarite slothfulness, this ease-loving disposition, are the bane of the present generation of professing Christians. The robustness of spiritual strength, the hardihood of Christian courage, the self-sacrificing disposition of ardent love, the cross-bearing temper of ever enduring self-denial, where are they? The church is reposing too much in the lap of the world, or drowsily reclining on her bosom. I do not forget that at the time I am penning these lines (May), the tribes are going up to Jerusalem to the great festival of Christian zeal and benevolence, and the hosts of the Lord are marshalling for conflict with the powers of darkness on the area of Exeter Hall. This is true,

and I rejoice over it with exceeding joy. But what is all this compared with what the church of Christ could do, and ought to do; with what professors are doing for themselves, and with that style of self-indulgence in which the great bulk of them are living? Of how many of them may it be said that to get and enjoy the good and the great things of this life, seems to be far more their aim than to secure eternal life, and meeten for its enjoyment. How few really make a business of religion, and how much fewer make it their great business? To come back to the subject and metaphor of this chapter, how strong and rapid is the tide of worldly thoughts, feeling, and action, setting in upon the shores of earth and time. The language of the poet is what every Christian ought to use and to feel, "Still more the treacherous calm I dread, than tempests raging o'er my head." And what shall preserve us from drifting on the shore, and being stranded there? The anchor. Let go your anchor, believer. You need it, I repeat, even more than in the storm raging on the broad ocean. Why are Christians so worldly? Why have the scenes and circumstances of earth so powerful an influence over us? Why? Just because the eternal realities and infinite possessions of heaven are so little thought of, and the desire and expectation of them so little cherished. Were the mind kept in contemplation of them, and the soul more frequently regaled with foretastes of the heavenly food and feast, it could not be content to feed on ashes and husks. It must feed on something; and in the absence of the former, it will take up with the latter. Did we but consider what heaven is, how glorious, and how certain, and how near; did we but really let our contemplation more steadily fix upon it; did we but

redeem a little more time from secular pursuits and domestic or social pleasures, to meditate upon it; did we really and firmly believe all that is told us of it; did we but inflame our desires after it, and enlarge our expectations of it; did we but get a foresight and foretaste of its vast, rich, and imperishable delights, how much would our regard to this world be diminished! How would the lights of earth twinkle, and pale, and all but go out, before the beams of the excellent glory! What we have to do then is to get a more lively hope of this inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. Have there not been seasons in the history of every believer, when not only sinful, but lawful pleasures, were all forgotten, and when earth dwindled in his view to its true insignificance? When even in sight of his possessions, he wondered by what power they had cast such a spell over him. Let us then go into the closet, as into a spiritual observatory, and adjusting the telescope of God's blessed Word to the heavenly object, fix the eye of faith to the lens, and bring eternity and eternal glory near, till our desires after it are kindled to the highest pitch, and our expectations of it are firmly grounded and settled on the basis of divine revelation. Or keeping by the metaphor, let us let down our anchor, and ride in safety against the strongest tide that sets in upon us. Did we not by experience know the contrary, we should be ready to think that with such an object of hope as heaven, we should find it difficult to be earthly; and yet sad experience teaches us, that surrounded as we are with earthly things, it is difficult to be heavenly. Keep up the power of hope, believer, and that will keep down the power and love of the world. And nothing else will do it.

But there is another use of an anchor than that which I have just considered, and that is to prevent the ship from being wrecked in a storm. Luke tells us, in his description of Paul's shipwreck, that "fearing lest they should have fallen upon rocks, they cast four anchors out of the stern, and waited for day." It is an interesting spectacle to see a noble vessel, when the hurricane is hurling winds and waves upon her with a force and fury that threaten every moment to dash her upon the rocks, or cast her upon the shore, held fast by an anchor; and however tossed about by the billows, riding out the tempest; and when the storm is hushed, pursuing her voyage with her masts all standing, her sails set, her pennon flying, and her crew rejoicing. And is not that the emblem of the Christian, overtaken by one of those storms which so often sweep over the ocean of human life, and cause so many and such fatal wrecks? I will advert to some of these storms. The most violent and awful, and those to which Scripture most frequently alludes, are those which are occasioned by persecution. These sometimes rise in to a perfect hurricane, resembling the typhoon of eastern seas, or the tornadoes of the West India islands. What a page, blackened with crime, and crimsoned with blood, has the pen of the ecclesiastical historian written! The history of the whole world scarcely furnishes a recital of such horrible sufferings as have been inflicted, first by pagans upon Christians, and then by professing Christians upon one another, and that not for crimes, but for opinions. In this career of blood Popery sustains an unenviable notoriety. It is conjectured that not less than fifty millions of Protestants have been slaughtered by Papists, with every variety of hor-

rible deaths, and every ingenuity of inventive torture. What mind can conceive the amount of agony which must have been endured by this noble army of martyrs? And what on the part of their persecutors, was the moving principle of their cruelty? Intense selfishness. And what, on the part of their victims, was the principle of their endurance? Christian hope. But for this we had never heard of a martyr; and with this, were the ages of blood to come over again, we should hear of millions more. Ancient pagans, who looked upon the sufferers in the amphitheatre offering themselves to be torn to pieces by lions; and more modern observers who have seen the sublime fortitude with which even women have passed through the iron gates of the inquisition never to return, or have yielded themselves up to the tortures of the rack or the stake, have wondered what principle was strong enough to sustain those victims of intolerance amidst terrors and torments so unutterable. Our subject explains the whole, the patience of hope. It is not merely faith, but hope. Faith may believe in the reality, the glory, the eternity, of a heaven for others, but hope expects it for the individual's own self. The key to the mystery of endurance, the secret of all this invincible courage, which leads on Christ's heroes to the fearful conflict, and makes them more than conquerors on the scaffold and at the stake, is the desire and expectation of the crown of life. "They reckon that the sufferings of this present life are not worthy to be compared with the glory to be revealed in them." They know "that their light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work out for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Yes, it is this single expectation, which

not only makes them willing to endure one death, but would bring them to endure, if possible, a thousand. Such and so glorious does heaven appear, that they count not their lives dear to them, so that they may at last wear its honours, and enjoy its felicities.

But let any one imagine, if indeed it be possible to imagine it in his circumstances of liberty ease and quiet, what a tempest the martyr has to endure. He is a husband and a father; he has a pleasant home, and a happy circle to share and enjoy it with him. While in the midst of all this pure delight, the calm is disturbed by gathering clouds, and portents of a coming storm appear on the horizon; the sky is soon overcast, the air is murky, and the rumblings of distant thunders are heard; on comes the tempest roaring and pouring out all its fury; the winds and the waves threaten him with immediate destruction, and what is to save him from being swallowed up by apostacy, or dashed upon the rocks of unbelief? His anchor, his anchor. Sorely is he tried. He looks upon the wife of his bosom, and the children of their love; he surveys his quiet home, and his ample fortune. Oh, to be torn from them, to be immersed in a dungeon, to be tortured upon the rack, to be consumed to ashes. How can he endure it? What a tumult of thought is in his soul. How nature pleads. How the man recoils from suffering; how the husband and the father shrink from separation. May he not concede a little? May he not for awhile conceal, if he do not deny, his principles? The conflict is terrible between humanity and Christianity, between nature and grace. The vessel is driving upon the rocks; fear is at the helm, and with a weak and trembling hand is guiding the wheel; faith, like a good pilot, springs to

the helm, snatches the handle from the feeble grasp of fear, and cries with a voice of strong authority, "Let go the anchor." It is done; it drops into the ocean, lays hold of the ground of promise, and the vessel is safe. The noble-minded believer sends up one piercing cry to heaven for help; that cry is heard; his fainting courage revives, his fears of death are subdued, his love of all that is dear to him on earth sinks below his love to Christ; he recovers from his depression; his dark desponding thoughts leave him, his wavering purpose is fixed; heaven appears to him in all its glories, eternity in all its dread importance, and he exclaims, with the exultation of a hero, "Who shall separate me from the love of Christ; shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution? Nay, in all these things I am more than conqueror, through him that hath loved me."

But persecution is not the only storm that arises on the voyage to eternity. There are the ordinary calamities of human life, which are indeed neither few nor small; the loss of health, of property, of friends, of domestic comfort. "Many are the afflictions of the righteous." There is no exemption for them from the sorrows of earth and time. God's devout children, his most devoted servants, travel home to their Father's house through the vale of tears; there is no other way even for them. Yea, "waters of a full cup are often wrung out to them;" they seem often marked out for suffering, and, like the man after God's own heart, exclaim, "Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy water-spouts; all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me." Their souls are sometimes so amazed and shaken with the variety, weight, continuance, and peculiarity of their trials, that they are thrown into the greatest perplexity of mind. Distressing and

troublous thoughts come into their minds, fiery darts of Satan, movements and stirrings of the flesh struggling against the spirit, till the poor soul, like Bunyan's Pilgrim when walking through the valley of the shadow of death, is assailed with all kinds of horrid shapes, and seems ready to perish. Or, to return again to the figure of this chapter, the soul is tempest-tost upon this troubled ocean, in danger of being dashed on the rocks of unbelief and despair, and ready to give up all for lost. Now is the time for the anchor, which the believer is at length, after some difficulty, enabled to let go. It is then that the promise prospect and expectation of eternal glory come with greatest power to his soul. Hope stills and composes those clamorous and disturbing thoughts, which in affliction are apt, like the tempest-birds in a storm, to flap their wings and scream over the shattered vessel. This was David's remedy; "Why art thou cast down, oh my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me. Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him." It is a mercy in affliction to be preserved from the delirium of the intellect; and is it not also a mercy to be kept from the delirium of the heart; from the disquieting, distressing, misjudging surmises of unbelief! Now what ice is to the temples of the former, cooling the blood, lowering the fever, and tranquillising the mind, that is hope to the latter. But this is not all it does, for in the place of those distempered thoughts, so full of bitterness and venom, and inflicting such pain, it fills the soul with the calm of peace and the notes of joy; it helps the Christian to smile through his tears, and paints the many coloured bow upon the dark clouds of grief. Hence the beautiful expression of the apostle, "Rejoicing in hope of the glory of God:" and what

next? "We glory in tribulation also." No glorying in tribulation if there be no rejoicing in hope. This grace, when earth is a dry and barren desert, without one drop of water, or one blade of verdure, fetches a cooling draught from the crystal river of life, and fruit from the tree that grows on its banks.

"Now all Christians, whether hopeful or despondent, are sometimes like the disciples on the Sea of Galilee, driven hither and thither by contrary winds. They toil all the night upon the deep, casting their nets, but taking nothing. Nay, oftentimes their sea is without a Christ walking upon the water, and their ship without a Christ, even asleep. Yet when they desire his coming upon the sea, and cry out to him, they soon see him walking to them over the waves. When they desire his awakening in the ship, they soon see him rising to rebuke the wind, saying, 'Peace, be still,' until there is a great calm. God hides his face only to disclose it again; and his hidings are oftentimes as full of mercy as his manifested presence. But whether to their feeble-sighted eyes he is present or absent, they may always know that 'he is not far from them at any time.' When there are clouds so that they cannot see him, they may look at him through faith, and discern that he is not far off. And as they that go down upon the deep, and are over-mastered by storms in darkness of the night, knowing not on what strange shores they may be thrown, cast anchor and wait for day, so in the midst of trial and temptation, when the storm is fierce and the night is dark, when the lights are quenched and the signals gone, they may cast anchor; and if they wait in faith and hope for the day, it will always dawn. The darkness will always hide itself, and the light appear. There never was a night so long that

the day did not overtake it. There never was a morning without its morning star. There never was a day without its sun."

But how does hope keep the soul quiet and steady in these seasons of trial? I answer, by exhibiting the future rest which God has provided for them that love him. There is in that one word, "heaven," a balm for every wound, a cordial for every fear. The soul reposes on the certainty of heaven. "The traveller, when overtaken by a shower, can stand patiently under a tree," says old Gurnall, "while it rains, because he hopes it is a shower, and sees it clear up in one part of heaven, while it is dark in another. Providence, I am sure, is never so dark and cloudy but hope can see fair weather. When the Christian's affairs are most disconsolate, he may soon meet with a happy change. It is but a moment, said a holy martyr to his fellow-sufferers in the fire, and our pain and sorrow are all over." Yes, says the sufferer, it is the certainty of future glory that fills me with consolation. However bright were the prospect, however glorious the scene, if I could not rely upon it, if I could entertain a doubt or a fear that it were all an illusion, I could have no comfort. But to know that there is a heaven to come, and that it is mine, is a consolation to be felt, though not to be described. Nor is it the certainty only, but the glory of that state, its transcendent excellence, that sustains the soul under its trials. How expressive is the language of the apostle, already quoted, "I reckon that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to be revealed in us." The value of a calculation depends of course upon its accuracy, and we are quite sure Paul was correct; he had both his own expe-

rience and the power of inspiration to keep him from error. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." There is a glory to come too great for language to describe, or imagination to conceive of, "an eternal weight of glory." What an expression! Never to be understood till it is possessed. For every pang, every sigh, every tear, every moment's suffering, millions of ages of ineffable, inconceivable felicity are to come. Can we wonder that hope of this should keep the soul from being overwhelmed by affliction, and shipwrecked by unbelief, despondency, and rebellion against God? And then hope not only rests upon the certainty and rejoices in the glory, of heaven, but expects that our present sufferings will contribute to our future bliss. Every tear is the seed of a smile; every groan the discord that prepares for a sweeter harmony; every loss the means of a gain; every disappointment the cause of a gain. A believer parts with his comforts on earth to receive a full return of happiness from the loss; just as the husbandman parts with his seed corn in sowing time, to receive it back a hundred-fold in his crop at harvest time. The Saviour said of himself, "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into his glory?" And our way to glory lies by the same road. He was officially made perfect through suffering, and we must be personally made perfect by the same means. Our trials may be as necessary to carry our souls to the haven of eternal repose, as is the wind to carry the ship to her destined port. We are very apt, in our ignorance, to call evil good, and good evil; to imagine God is blessing us with his richest favours, when he causes the sun of prosperity to shine with noon-tide splendour upon us; and that he is cursing us with his heaviest

judgments when our condition is overcast with the clouds of adversity; but the contrary may be the case; just as there are times in regard to agriculture, when sunshine is a curse, and clouds, gloom, and rain a blessing. We need the cloud and rain of adversity, as well as the sunshine of prosperity, and far more. Hope has an eye to see heaven in a cloudy day, and an anchor that can find a firm bottom to lay hold of, under a weight and depth of waters. Here is its safe and blessed anchorage in that one passage, "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, and are the called according to his purpose." Afflictions then, are among the all things which are working for our good; they are like bitter medicines and sharp operations, which put us to present pain for future health; or like property sunk at present in unproductive employment, to yield a large profit hereafter; or like the troubled stormy ocean, over which we must sail to the haven of rest, and for which we are provided, and through which we are carried in safety, by having on board this anchor of hope.

But of what use is an anchor, if it be not a good one? Great care is taken to secure good iron, and to have it well wrought in making one. Neglect in this particular would endanger the best ship, having on board the richest cargo. And as it is not every kind of materiel that will answer this purpose of an anchor; so it is not every kind of hope that will preserve the soul from destruction. There is such a thing as a false hope, and there is also a good one. That hope only is good which rests on the foundation which God has laid in Zion, which is fixed on the heaven revealed

in Scripture, aud purifies the soul from sin and worldliness. Let us look well to the nature of our anchor.

And of what value is the best anchor, if it be not used, and used well? Christians, are yours? Oh, keep up the desire and expectation of eternal glory. With heaven above, and eternity before you, and such events as the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in power and glory, the resurrection of the body and life everlasting, do not allow yourselves to be swallowed up in worldliness, or overwhelmed by afflictions. Hope is a grace which you need to keep in daily exercise. And choose your proper anchorage, the promises of God in his blessed Word. The speculations of fancy, the deductions of reason, the suggestions of philosophy, are but insecure ground; and all ideas of your own personal excellence are but quicksands, which will deceive you; it is the promise of God in Christ Jesus into which you must cast your anchor, and then come what will in the way of either calm or storm, it will hold, and never drag; and you are safe.

CHAPTER IX.

HOPE THE CHRISTIAN'S HELMET.

This figure forms part of one of the most instructive impressive, and awful, yet beautiful passages of Holy Writ, "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." In this wonderful and alarming paragraph, we are led to contemplate the malignity, power, and craft of that mighty and mysterious enemy of God and man, the devil. There is a terrific grandeur connected with this dreadful personage, and an obscurity never to be cleared up till the light of eternity shall reveal the subject. That he has a true personality, and is not an oriental personification of the principle of evil, must be admitted by all who place implicit confidence in the Scripture narrative. If Satan be a mere figure of speech, why may not even Christ, and the whole historic facts of the Bible, be a collection of myths and fables? Yes, he is a personality, and a being of vastly greater power, perhaps, than the most vigorous imagination ever yet conceived. Our great bard has done all that poetic genius can accomplish in the way of setting forth the power, hatred, rage, and craft of the fallen and diabolized archangel. But it is

a subject under which even his noble intellect bends, and the Satan of the "Paradise Lost" conveys perhaps only a poor and feeble idea of this mighty foe of all holiness and holy beings, compared with the more awfully mysterious, and superhuman, yea, almost super-angelic, personage of the sacred Scriptures. One of the impressive disclosures of eternity will be the full manifestation of the terrible power of this leader of rebellion against God; this agent by whom evil was introduced into our world; this first apostate from holiness, whose influence fascinated so large a portion of the heavenly hosts to their ruin, and formed a confederacy in heaven against its Omnipotent Sovereign. The devil is still a deep mystery of wickedness and power. One of the chief glories to be witnessed in another world will be Christ's triumph over him; and one of the greatest wonders connected with ourselves will be our deliverance from his wiles, his malice, and his power.

What a view of this adversary does the passage just quoted give us! The apostle calls upon us to arm ourselves with the whole panoply of God against the "wiles" of the devil; intimating that his warfare is conducted with consummate craft, and consists of continued stratagems. His battles are the rush of a sudden ambuscade, when and where they are least expected. He fights not on an open field, but by sudden assault, secret and cunning onslaught, and his aim is to throw his opponents off their guard, and then to surprise them. Sleepless vigilance, self-possession, and promptitude are therefore indispensable to cope with him. These are all the more necessary, as "we wrestle not with flesh and blood." It is not a contest with

mere humanity, man against man, the potsherd striving with the potsherd; but man against spirit; humanity engaged in the unequal contest with a demonised archangel. It is a contest "against principalities and powers," beings of high order and rank and dominion in the world of spirits; a host marshalled under one great arch-fiend, a chief among the lost. It is not merely the common damned, the vulgar herd of fiends that we encounter, but the leader of the great rebellion and his staff, such as are darkly eminent in rank and dignity; "the rulers of the darkness of this world:" the spirits that reign and rule amidst the darkness of Paganism, Mahommedanism, Judaism, Popery, and Infidelity, forming the murky zone which so painfully environs the church, and producing that spiritual eclipse which has covered the unbelieving world with such an ominous and lowering shadow. It is very obvious from this, as well as from many other parts of Scripture, that, in some mysterious ways unknown to us, these fallen spirits have dominion over the realms of ignorance, superstition, heresy, infidelity, and idolatry, and rivet the chains of error upon the enslaved intellect of man. "Against spiritual wickedness in high places;" or as it might and should be rendered, "against the spirits of evil," or "wicked spirits in heavenly places." Yes, spirits, spirits again, wicked spirits. Their nature is evil; their commission is evil; their work is evil. They are evil, and evil only, alike in essence and operation. All their powers, which are vast both for contrivance and execution, all their activity, ceaseless and unwearied, are employed for evil. And all this operation for evil "in heavenly places," not only in the earthly places of the world, but in the heavenly

places of the church. They scruple not to invade the kingdom of Christ. Yea, their great aim is to pollute, to divide, to secularize, to overthrow, the church. See how they have succeeded in the rise, progress, and wide extent and dominion of the Papacy. Nothing gives me such an idea of the subtlety and power of Satan as this dreadful system, which, where it prevails, is Christianity thrown into almost total eclipse by the power and craft of the devil. This, then, is the description of our great adversary. To rouse up the Christian soldiery, not to dishearten or discourage them, but to excite them to valorous deeds and determined opposition, the apostle gives us this impressive warning of our enemy and his power. He marshals the forces of our adversary before us, and bids us look at our foe. Can we wonder that, in order to prevent us from being appalled and dismayed, he should introduce this all but overwhelming representation of our enemy, with so precious an exhibition of our resources as is contained in that short but all comprehensive admonition, "Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might?" Was it not wise, a master-stroke of sacred policy, before he led us out to conflict with our foe, to take us into "the secret places of the Most High," and surround us "with the shadow of the Almighty," and even before he conducted us into the armoury, and bade us put on the panoply provided, to lead us up to God, that we may contemplate his omnipotence, and thus fill our souls with courage for the conflict? No matter what armour is provided, how finely tempered, how highly polished, how closely fitted it may be, if there be no courage in the heart; if a man have merely the dress of a soldier, but the spirit of a poltroon. Soldiers

usually have invincible courage when they have confidence in the skill and bravery of their leader, and when the power of his might, in which they are strong, has proved its vigour in routing the foe which they are summoned to encounter. As "the Captain of salvation," Christ "spoiled principalities and powers," and now calls us to engage in battle with the same enemies, and, in fact, to arm ourselves with the same power, even his own. Satan may be, is, powerful, more powerful than we imagine; but God is all powerful; and therefore whatever might we go to conflict with, we go to meet it with Omnipotence. There is uncommon force in the expression, "Be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might." It was as if he had said, Clothe yourselves with Omnipotence; arm yourselves with Omnipotence; fight with Omnipotence; God lends you his almightiness. Go to the field not only as warriors and heroes, but as God-prompted, God-sustained men.

Now let us enter the armoury of the Lord, and look at the weapons, offensive and defensive, provided for us. You will see that the command is to take "the whole armour." We must engage in our conflict with Satan armed from head to foot. No part of the soul must be left uncovered, and it must be with the very armour which God has provided. We must not go to philosophy, to reason, to any scheme of defence against our spiritual foe, devised by man. It must be God's arsenal, and not man's, that must supply the panoply. And the reason for this is, that we may "stand in the evil day," that is, the day of Satan's terrible assault. It is called the "evil day" because it is an evil thing even to be tempted; it costs us

much perplexity and distress to be thus assailed; our fears are excited; our alarms are painful; our apprehensions of defeat sometimes agonizing: and if the temptation prove successful, it is an evil day indeed, as multitudes have found it, in their damaged reputation, their disturbed peace, their prostrate honours, their impaired usefulness. Hence the necessity of praying, "Lead us not into temptation," and hence also the propriety of the apostle's exhortation, "Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour."

Now consider the armour. "Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth." This is an allusion to the military belt or sash, which was with the ancients an important part of their dress in war, as well as in peace; it served at once for ornament and use; it was designed to keep the other parts of their dress in their place. In the Christian profession and the spiritual life, truthfulness or sincerity acts the part of the girdle. Next comes "the breastplate of righteousness." The breastplate was a coat of metal, or plates of horn, or folds of leather, or chain armour, to protect the chest and the front of the body. In our warfare righteousness, or holiness of life, answers this purpose. The ancients defended their legs and feet, the latter with sandals, and the former with greaves, or a kind of leggings which came from the footsteps up the front of the leg or shin-bone. The christian warrior is to be defended from Satanic assaults "by joy and peace in believing." The joy of the Lord that is unspeakable, and the peace that passeth understanding, will keep him in the midst of danger. "Above all," or "over" all, says the apostle, take "the shield of faith, whereby ye shall be able

to quench the fiery darts of the wicked." This defensive weapon was usually made of light wood, covered with several folds of stout hide, and having a rim of brass; it was held on the left arm, and was intended to protect the body from the sword or arrows of an assailant. Arrows were sometimes tipped with a hollow globe containing combustible materials, which, by passing through the atmosphere, or by the percussion when they struck, was set on fire, and communicated the flames to ships, tents, or any inflammable substance. Faith answers to the shield, and by it the fiery darts of Satan are quenched. By these some understand that particular species of temptation which consists of wicked, horrid, blasphemous suggestions and excitements to evil, which in the most unaccountable manner sometimes rise up in the mind of pious persons to their great affliction. None of us are without them. No association of ideas can account for them; no immediate objects before us lead to them; they come suddenly into the soul, and occasion much agony and astonishment. I have often had to quiet the apprehensions of good people alarmed by such thoughts, by assuring them we are not answerable for what thoughts come into the mind, but only for what thoughts we keep in the mind. To these we must ever oppose the shield of faith, which will put them all out, as a wall would put out a candle thrown against it.

But is the head to be left unprotected? No: for we are to take the "helmet of hope." As this is the subject of the present chapter, I shall enlarge on it presently; and in the mean time remark that all the armour hitherto mentioned is defensive. Is the Christian then ever to stand upon the defensive? Is he to make no aggression upon his enemies? Is he to remain

always at his post, and never engage in the assault? No. He is to "take the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God." That Word of revealed truth which is written by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, by which the Spirit carries on his renewing, comforting, and sanctifying work in the souls of believers, and by which the great Captain of our salvation himself defeated the enemy, when tempted in the wilderness. Nor must we stop here, for to all must be added that without which all the rest would be ineffectual, the "all prayer and supplication." Without constant, believing, fervent prayer, however he may seem to be protected and armed, the believer cannot stand against his foe. The devil will laugh at the strongest professor, with the best adapted armour, unaccompanied by prayer: "but Satan trembles when he sees the weakest saint upon his knees."

I now come to consider the helmet. I scarcely need say that the helmet is a piece of armour for the defence of the head. And is there anything in christian hope which renders the helmet a specially appropriate figure to set it forth? Perhaps there is. The head contains the brain, the organ of thought. When we distinguish between the intellect and the emotions, we speak of the former as the head, the latter as the heart. So in the Christian life we use precisely the same figures: the head in "the new man" is our mind, as the affections are the heart. The helmet, in this divine panoply of the soul, is for the defence of the understanding from wrong thinking, either in the way of sin, worldliness, or error. How much of true godliness lies in a right condition of the Christian intellect! It is but a part of religion that consists in action. The greater portion

of man's moral history lies in the soul, out of sight of our fellow-creatures, but not out of sight of God. I much fear this is not sufficiently understood or remembered. Yet it is a most momentous idea. Our conduct and words form a very small part of our moral selves. Let any one reflect how much is always going on in the secret recesses of the soul: what multitudes of thoughts are ever crowding the intellect, and what multitudes of feelings the heart; and the greater portion of them partake of a moral character. Let it be considered how much of evil a wicked man perpetrates in desires, wishes, intentions, volitions, devices, and imaginations; how much more indeed than he has the opportunity or the courage to bring out in his actions. Even the Christian must be sensible of this fact, that more evil is in the heart than is reduced to practice. And so of the opposite; how much of holy desire, volition, purpose, plan, is ever going on within the bosom of a child of God, which no eye but that of his Father sees! Hence the truth of the assertion, that it is but a portion of our moral history which is seen in our outward character, and the indispensable necessity of our looking well to the state of our hearts. Let us take good care of our hearts, and our hearts will take care of our lives. We must watch well our thoughts, for holy thinking gives rise to holy feeling, and ends in holy action. It is much the same with sin, for the apostle says, "When lust (or evil desire) hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." This is the order in all rational creatures, thought, feeling, volition, action. Thought is the bud, of which feeling is the blossom, volition the setting, and action the fruit. All wrong doing begins in wrong thinking; and

all right doing in right thinking. Hence it is of infinite importance for the Christian to be attentive, seriously, devoutly, anxiously attentive, not only to the state of his heart, but the state of his head. This was what Solomon meant where he says: "Keep the heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life." Keep a strict watch over your thoughts and inclinations. The mind is always consciously busy in its waking hours. We can no more suspend the power and action of our thinking principle, than we can suspend the action of our heart or lungs. Nor can we prevent the entrance of evil thoughts into our minds; these, like bad company, will obtrude themselves upon us, but it is at our option to retain or expel them. They will light down, like birds of prey, even upon our sacrifices of devotion, but we can either fray them away as we please, or suffer them to pollute or consume the offering. Our thoughts are in their rise involuntary, the soul is passive in their reception, but active in its treatment of them when they have come. Hence the control of the thoughts is one of the most necessary exercises of self-government, one of the most important parts of personal piety. There must not only be the government of the senses, or a strict watch over their exercise upon external objects, (though this is both necessary and important, for the senses are the doors of the soul,) but a most vigilant attention to what is passing within.

There are various classes of evil thoughts, against which, as pernicious, we must be upon our guard. There are idle thoughts, or the perpetual exercise of the intellect about trifles, matters that have not the weight of a feather or the value of a grain of sand. It is a pitiable sight to behold an intellect that can contemplate such

sublime objects as God, Christ, salvation, heaven, eternity, wasting its energies, (no, not its energies, for it has none but) frittering away its feeble powers on absolute littlenesses, on almost nonentities; in short, evaporating the powers of a man in the exercises of a child. Many carry their intellects as a little child does a watch, ignorant alike of their construction and their use. It would be instructive and sometimes humiliating for them, sometimes to ask themselves, at the close of a day, "What have I been thinking about to-day? What matters have engaged my attention and employed my intellect?" This folly of encouraging idle thoughts, is a double waste, of intellect and of time. And christian hope will be a defence against it, by giving us something great to think about, and prompting us to think about it. Even Christians need to be admonished on this head; their renewed and sanctified intellects are too full of little matters; even they have not, since they became men, put away all childish things. With their immortal hopes, they are too puerile, and taken up with the toys of the children of the world, when they should be engaged with the subjects that occupy the attention of archangels.

Then there are worldly thoughts, I mean there are minds wholly and entirely engrossed in the things of the world, and thinking about nothing else. There are persons, of whom it can be most truly and emphatically said, "they mind earthly things?" Their intellect is a kind of shop, or market, or exchange, or manufactory, where nothing but crowds of buyers and sellers, nothing but bargain and sale, nothing but calculations of profit and loss, nothing but the buzz and hum of trade and commerce, is seen or ever heard. Of course

every man must have much of this; but it is a sad thing where he has nothing else; and where his soul, which was intended to be a temple for God, is nothing better than a house of merchandise. Christian hope, if in vigorous exercise, while it would not unfit a man for business, paralyse his industry, or extinguish his desire of success, would still raise him above the world, and give him something else to think about. It is this that is wanted in greater power among professing Christians. The spirit of the world is coming, is come, into the church. Business, business, business: profit, profit, profit; elegance, entertainment, and luxurious gratification, are occupying, far more than they ought to do, the minds of professing Christians. Why? Because their hope of heaven is low. Their helmet is laid aside. The world aims its blows at the head, and professors are not sufficiently protected against it. It is only the desire and expectation of heaven that can be a sufficient defence against the influences and encroachments of earth. We do not let "the glory that excelleth" come in, as we should do, upon the glory of this lower world.

How apt are many to harbour proud thoughts! Pride seems natural to humanity, and it is strange and even ridiculous to see what really insignificant and almost contemptible matters will give occasion for its exercise. On what trifles will some persons found claims to distinction and superiority, when comparing themselves with their fellow-creatures! Could we search the heart as God can, and does, how much of this self-exaltation, valuation, and admiration should we see ever going on. Pride has its place and its operation, not only in the world, but in the church. It is not only intellect, and wealth, and rank, and

beauty, that give occasion for it, but piety, experience, liberality, activity, success. The more real excellence there is, the greater is the danger of falling into this sin. Spiritual pride is, of all kinds, the most hateful and offensive both to God and man. And what Christian is there, who, if he be attentive to his own thoughts, does not know that he has often detected himself standing before the glass, and admiring the beauty of his character and conduct? Hope is one of the best preservatives from this. Who can look down at the foundation, and recollect that he owes all to grace, and rests entirely upon the atonement and merit of Christ for his eternal salvation; and then look up and consider the perfection of heaven, which brings out so strongly his own imperfection, and not feel all occasion for pride taken away from him? Who does not know, by experience, that he is never so low, mean, and unworthy in his own eyes, as when he looks up into heaven, and contemplates not only the excellence of the spirits of just men made perfect; not only the spotless innocence of angels; but the infinite, immaculate purity of the Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God Almighty? Humility grows most rapidly and most healthily by heavenly-mindedness. It was this that humbled the prophet Isaiah, and made him cry out, "Woe is me, for I am undone, for I am a man of unclean lips." It was this that took all high thoughts from the patriarch Job: "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes," Yes, and the nearer we come, by devout contemplation and lively hope, to the heavenly world, the more shall we enter into those beautiful words of Watts,

"The more thy glories strike mine eyes,
The humbler I shall lie:
Thus while I sink, my joys shall rise
Unmeasurably high."

There are also angry, vengeful, malicious thoughts: and alas, how many such are to be found in the minds of us all; how difficult is it under provocation, and injury, and insult, to exercise the charity "that suffereth long, and is kind;" how difficult to keep out implacable, revengeful, malicious thoughts; and not to brood over offences with inflamed imaginations and exaggerating ideas! What pictures of the offender we draw, how hideous a monster we are apt to make him; how we represent him as entirely destitute of all claims to charity or even forgiveness! We thus provoke our feelings by our thoughts; our feelings prompt our words; and our words end in actions that return evil for evil. Genuine love under injury is the most rare, because the most difficult, of all duties; and yet it is made by the apostle indispensable to true religion: it is in fact true religion itself. How shall we defend our head against the blows of our great enemy, who endeavours to slay us by tempting us to malice, wrath, and all uncharitableness? How? By putting on as our helmet the hope of salvation. The ardent desire and confident expectation of heaven is one of our most secure defences against malicious and revengeful thoughts. What is heaven? A region of holy love, perfect love, eternal love; no malice shall ever enter there: the unruffled serenity which is a stranger to ill-will, shall reign there; not a thought contrary to the most entire and universal benevolence shall ever enter the mind of a single inhabitant of that happy world.

Now the very hope of such a heaven tends to change the mind into the likeness of itself; the contemplation of that state brings loving, holy thoughts into the mind, and thus expels others of a contrary nature. Bring me a passionate, wrathful, implacable, and malevolent professor, thinking of the evil his brother has done to him, and meditating what evil he will in return do to him, and I will ask him, "Do you hope for heaven? Do you believe you can have a title to heaven if your sins are not forgiven? Can your sins be forgiven if you do not forgive those that injure you? Can you go to heaven without meetness for it? Is not holy love that meetness? Will not holy love lead you to forgive? Do you desire this meetness? Can you possess it if you harbour all kinds of unforgiving thoughts? Would you overcome your malevolent temper? Then I say, keep up your christian hope. Be often at the gates of heaven. Meditate on its ineffable glories. Consider they are all glories of love. I tell you one of the best cures of an unforgiving mind, is the intelligent, scriptural hope of heaven."

Many have to complain of impure, licentious thoughts; these come unbidden into the mind; no object appealing to the senses excites them, and to the pure in heart they are an offence and a grief: of course all that would excite them should be avoided, such as books, pictures, natural objects, and conversation. We must watch our senses, and make a covenant with our eyes not to look on what would suggest impure thoughts. He that carries gunpowder about his person should not venture near the fire; and he that would not catch the plague, should not come in contact with a person infected with it. As I have lately said, we are not answerable for thoughts that come

unbidden into the mind; but we are for such as we invite, and we do invite them when we hold familiar intercourse with subjects that necessarily produce them. In this case, whether the thoughts are brought in, or come in, hope is our defence. Before the rays of the excellent glory which fall upon the soul in full contemplation of heaven, these unhallowed fires will be extinguished. When these obscene ideas come into the mind, turn it heavenward; drive back the foul current by a stronger and a purer one.

I must not omit hard thoughts of God regarding the dispensations of his providence. Sometimes these are produced by heavy, peculiar, and long continued afflictions. In those night seasons of the christian life, when the outer darkness deepens into an inner gloom of the mind still more dark, what fearful questionings, what awful scepticism, what sullen moodiness of spirit, what rebellious ideas, what atheistic reasonings, haunt the soul! Satan sees it in this sad perplexity and rushes in with his fiery assault. It is now in the palpable obscure, the darkness that may be felt, the very valley of the shadow of death. It is in great danger of absolute despair, or overwhelming scepticism. What shall preserve it in such a case? Only turning from the mysteries of providence to the scheme of saving grace; only the hope of that world where what is now dark will be illumined, and what is mystery will become revelation; only the expectation of the end, when all that now puzzles and perplexes us, will astonish and delight us; only the contemplation of that ocean of light, love, and joy, into which these dark and winding streams of Providence will discharge themselves, and help to swell that boundless, stormless sea,

"where not a wave of trouble rolls, across the peaceful breast."

And are there not thoughts of error against which a defence is necessary? What better defence can we find than this helmet, which is the hope of salvation? Never was there an age in which the Christian more needed to be completely armed against the attacks of heresy than the present. An undisguised infidelity which is assiduously labouring to associate even science with itself; an atheistic philosophy which is seizing our periodical press, and insinuating itself into our general literature; and what is still more dangerous, because not so openly, nor so intentionally, hostile to Christianity, systems of doctrine, which while professing to do homage to Christianity, and to propound its leading truths, obscure the objects of our faith, and undermine the foundation of our hope: all these perils thrown in our way, and rendered still more perilous by the genius and the eloquence by which they are set forth and recommended, are filling the minds of many professors of religion, and especially the younger ones, with thoughts that endanger their stedfastness in the faith. The winds of false doctrine are blowing from every quarter; and even within the pale of what we consider and call evangelical religion, a leaven of error is unquestionably at work, and diffusing itself, the sad results of which, at no very distant day, will unquestionably be seen. A gradual but unintentional preparation for this is to my eye clearly discernible in those apologies which we are continually hearing or reading from men generally, and upon the whole, orthodox, on behalf of those who, if not off the foundation, are obviously out of the perpendicular of

revealed truth. I confess to a considerable jealousy of much that is said and done in the circle of what is still called evangelicism. We are told some do not view divine truth from the same stand-point, do not speak of it in precisely the same language as others, and yet hold the same doctrines in substance; and that we must therefore have a broad and ample charity to cover over these differences. Provided the great fundamental truths of the mediatorial scheme of the gospel are really retained, truths which are "the family jewels of God's redeemed family, the heir-loom to be handed down from generation to generation, there can be no heresy in having them re-set in language and style of composition suited to the taste of the age." I most willingly concede this; yet I am not easy under the excessive demand which is made for a change of the outward form of truth; this is to me somewhat portentous. It seems a dangerous opiate that will close the watchful eye by which the sacred deposit of divine truth ought ever to be watched. In this age we are in no danger of narrow-minded bigotry, the tyranny of authority, obstinate attachment to old forms, childish veneration for hoary antiquity, or a propensity to forge shackles for liberty and independence of thought; our danger lies in the opposite extreme, of liberty running into licentiousness; worship of novelty; contempt for collective wisdom and the accumulations of experience; the rejection of all guidance but our own individual experience; and the disposition, amidst modern illumination, to treat as worthless and mere ignes fatui, all the great lights of bygone ages. That sound orthodoxy, both in the established church and among the dissenting bodies, is somewhat in danger, at least for a season, I have no more

doubt than that I am recording my opinion on this page. The best defence we can set up against this tendency is, to keep up the vigour of spiritual life in our churches, and of this christian hope is one of the most essential and healthful exercises. Fundamental error is not likely to gain entrance and exercise in a heavenly mind; and heavenliness implies hope. While the soul is maintaining a solemn, devout, and practical regard to the celestial state, it keeps its hold on the truth as it is in Jesus. No one who is looking for eternal life will, or can, be indifferent to the basis on which such an expectation rests. He will take heed that he is not raising a Babel on a quicksand. I have already shown that Christ in his atoning work is the only foundation of a good hope. As long, therefore, as there is an earnest desire and confident expectation of eternal happiness, there will be no disposition to give up those great truths on which the soul builds her immortal hopes. It is only when she has become earthly in her habitual state, only when she has lost her high and holy aspiration towards the heavenly kingdom, that she can become reconciled to error, and in such a state she can be very soon reconciled to it. To a carnal, earthly mind, errors of various kinds have much to recommend them. Error and earthliness are congenial states of mind. Hence we see that those communities which have given up the fundamental doctrines of the gospel are distinguished for their worldliness. Let our churches become worldly, and the same effect will soon be visible in their indifference to doctrinal truth.

If this be true, and it cannot be doubted, much less denied, it shows us the importance of our ministers being not only earnest for the preservation of sound doctrine,

but equally earnest for maintaining spiritual life as the means of preserving it. Lifeless orthodoxy is but very little better than lifeless heterodoxy; they are both but corpses, only one is less hideous and less offensive than the other. It is well enough to "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints," but it is no less well to contend as earnestly for the blessed hope of the redeemed church. Let us all consider we are safe from error only so far as we find, feel, and exhibit a living power in the truth we hold.

Let us then look well to our helmet, and never venture into the field without it; and let us take heed that it be of the right kind, made of the right material, and able to resist the assaults of the foe. A good hope through grace; a hope founded exclusively on Christ, which looks for an eternity of holiness, as that which can alone yield an eternity of happiness; this, and this only, constitutes the helmet that will resist the blows which Satan aims at the head of the Christian.

The facts of ecclesiastical history will serve as proof and illustration of all that has been said in this chapter. When spiritual life has been lost, creeds, confessions, and articles of faith have been found an insufficient breakwater against the waves of error, and a feeble defence of orthodoxy. To this I ascribe the prevalence of Rationalism in Germany, and other parts of the Continent, where the formularies of Luther and Calvin still continued to be the established standard of truth long after their spiritual influence was gone. Both the Scottish and English establishments furnish similar evidence, and so also does the history of Nonconformity. This might be illustrated also in the case of individual ministers. I know one who is still living, who, after

being educated at one of our colleges, embraced Unitarianism, and for a time preached its doctrines; he was, however, at length brought back to his former views. In an interview I had with him, I asked him if he could trace his doctrinal lapse to any particular cause? He said, "Yes: I lost the power of vital godliness, and then theological orthodox opinions became a matter of indifference to me, and I abandoned them for others more flattering to the pride of intellect." These, if not his exact words, contain the substance of what he said: and this one fact alone shows the vast importance of keeping up the true spiritual life. Truth in the intellect, and life in the heart, act and re-act upon each other, just as in the human body the healthy state of the brain and the right action of the heart influence each other. We must have sound doctrine to originate, sustain, and quicken spiritual life; and we must have spiritual life to strengthen our hold upon sound doctrine.

CHAPTER X.

VARIOUS QUALITIES OF HOPE.

Good Hope through Grace.

So the apostle calls it, 2 Thes. ii, 16, and connects with it the enjoyment of "everlasting consolation." There is a richness of expression in these few words, to which no exposition or paraphrase can do justice. Every view we can take of the Christian hope, entitles it to this description. It is good, absolutely. Good in its foundation, which is Christ; good in its objects, which is heaven; good in its influence, which is holiness; good in its power to support and comfort under all the trials of life; good for all persons from the prince to the peasant; good for all occasions, for prosperity and adversity; good through all the journey of life, and amidst all the agonies of death. Whoever tried it, and found it otherwise than good? Was this adjective ever more truly or more appropriately applied to any object? Every believer who entertains it, and feels its blessed influence will joyfully exclaim, "Yes, if there be anything good on earth, anything in me, anything in religion, it is this. Whatever good things I have, this is best. I would, if my heart do not deceive me, part with all, rather than this; and if, on the deprivation

of property, friends, health, I were asked what I had left, I would answer from the midst of surrounding evils, 'A good hope through grace,' and feel that, having nothing else but this, I should account myself possessing all things." What multitudes have experienced this, and found that hope has stood by them, when everything else had fled. As the sun paints the clouds with gorgeous hues and converts them into the magnificent drapery in which he arrays the heavens, so a believing and radiant heart sends forth its hope upon its sorrows, and all the blackness flies off, and troubles that seemed likely to extinguish it, serve only as a theatre to display its glory. Is not this good?

But the Christian's hope is good comparatively. How insignificant, little, and mean, are the objects of worldly desire and expectation. What are wealth, rank, fame, pleasure, compared with the glory, honour, immortality, and eternal life, which the believer looks for beyond the grave? They are all of the earth, earthly, this is heavenly; they are human, this divine; they are transient, this everlasting; they are unsatisfying, leaving the soul a void unfilled; this replenishes its vast capacity; they are fleeting, shadowy, and precarious, this absolutely certain; they are to this the toys of children, compared with the occupations of Newton, when penetrating space with his telescope, surveying the heavens, ascertaining and contemplating the stars, his bosom swelling with the hope of discoveries that would instruct the world and immortalize himself; they leave the poor, craving soul, exclaiming, "Who will show us any good?" this compels him, with rapture, to exclaim, "I have found it, I have found it."

Compare this hope with that of the heathen, and see

how good it is. How dim and uncertain were the views of the wisest and best of these, as set forth in the doubtful expectations of Cicero, the dreamy speculations of Plato, and the feeble anticipations of the dying Socrates. Were those sages of Greece, those lights of the ancient world, to revisit our earth with no more knowledge than they carried away with them, they might thankfully sit at the feet of a heaven-taught Sunday-school girl, and from her lips learn lessons of immortality which their discoveries never enabled them to reach. As a proof of this, I refer to their sayings. The hope of immortality is styled by Cicero, "A conjecture or surmise of future ages." Seneca says "It is that which our wise men do promise, but do not prove." Socrates, at his death, said, "I hope to go hence to good men, but of that I am not very confident; nor doth it become any wise man to be positive that so it will be. I must now die, and you shall live; but which of us is in the better state God only knows." Pliny says, "Neither soul nor body has any more sense after death than before it was born." Aristotle held "that death was terrible, as putting an end to all things." Plutarch speaks of "the fabulous hope of immortality." How evident is it from the experience and testimony of such men, that reason is inadequate to the discovery of a future state; and that nothing could make it certain to man, except a revelation from God. The attempt never could have been made with greater advantages than by the philosophers of Greece and Rome: and they confessed that they could arrive at no certainty on the subject. In this state of things the gospel comes with its glorious discoveries, abolishes death, that is, renders its reign but transient; and

establishes the fact, not only of the immortality of the soul, but of the resurrection of the body; thus solving the great and awful problem of man's nature and destiny, and bringing in everlasting consolation, and a good hope through grace.

Mohammedanism holds out its Paradise, but how grovelling, how sensual, how unworthy the soul of man! The false prophet accommodates his heaven to the lowest animal passions of our nature, and promises the faithful little more or better than the harem of an Eastern despot. He carries his sensual system into the celestial state, and peoples his eternal world with a race of voluptuaries. What a contrast is here presented to the Christian Paradise, where flesh and blood are excluded with all their grosser appetites and propensities; and not only is the soul perfect in purity, but even the body is too spiritual for the sensual passions of the flesh.

Little better is the Elysium of the classic nations of Greece and Rome, or rather of their poets, and it was only poetry. If we consult Homer, Virgil, Pindar, and others, they rise no higher than converse with gods stained with crime, amidst murmuring springs, gliding streams, verdant meadows, green bowers, and warbling birds; other poets add mirth and sensual delight. True it is the philosophers turned away in partial disgust from these low views, yet they had nothing to substitute for them, which could be relied upon with certainty. Now and then a dim ray of light seemed to pierce the clouds of mortality, and point to a region beyond them, but while the eye of reason looked at it, it vanished like a meteor, and left the benighted, bewildered philosopher in his doubt and darkness. I

need not further enlarge upon this, than to contrast Cicero's sceptical apostrophe to the coming day of transition from earth to heaven, with Paul's triumphant confidence, where he says, "We know that if the earthly house of our tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." There was Paganism, straining her eye to explore the dark abyss of the grave, with feeble fluttering hope, and strong prevailing fear, holding up her dark lantern, but making no discovery, uttering her inquiring voice, but receiving no response: all remaining dark and silent to her. Here is Christianity gazing with steady faith, living hope, and enraptured view, amidst the broad day-light of revelation, over the sweet fields beyond the narrow stream of death, dressed with the living green, and adorned with the amaranthine flowers of the celestial Paradise. Oh, precious gospel, which has thus laid open to us not only the glory, but the certainty of a future state of bliss!

It is hardly worth while to bring into the comparison those monstrous, fantastic, and grovelling representations of the future state which are the products of modern Paganism, the transmigration of souls of the Eastern world from body to body, through millions of ages, till they are at last absorbed in the gods; or the hunting grounds and pleasures of the chase, which form the future of savage tribes. Who can contemplate these varied, but grovelling and uncertain expectations, held by the ancient and modern heathens, and not see, comparing them with the Christian faith, the truth and force of the apostle's description, when he calls it a good hope?

Compare it with the hope of the Jew. How scanty were the revelations of a future state under the Old Testament! How seldom did the sun of the celestial world seem to break through the clouds and shadows of the Levitical economy, and throw its lustre on the path of even the pious Israelite! In what gloom and deep dejection did he approach the sepulchre! Where in all the law, the psalms, and prophets, do we find those triumphant anticipations of eternal glory, which are so frequent in the writings of holy Paul? Where do we see the ancient believer looking up into heaven with the exulting expectation that he shall soon be there with God and his saints? How rarely did David strike his harp or tune his voice in praise of the heaven to come! How seldom did even the evangelical prophet Isaiah rise high on the wing of prophecy till he bathed his spirit in the flood of the excellent glory, and then descended to tell the visions he had seen! One chapter, I might almost say one verse, of the New Testament, tells us more of the celestial world, as to the reality and nature of its felicities, than all the pages of the Old. So true are the apostle's words already quoted, "He hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light by the gospel." Is it not then a good hope that Christians have? And for a moment, dwell on its source, as expressed in this verse, "a good hope through grace." Any hope, the expectation of the smallest favour, even shortening the term, or lightening the weight of punishment would be favour; annihilation would be mercy for sinners who deserved to be plunged in eternal despair; just as any situation on earth might be esteemed a favour for a man who had been condemned to die, and deserved it. It had

been grace to be merely exempted from the bitter pains of eternal death, though our eternal destiny had been to dwell in some world far from God's presence, with only some few comforts to make existence tolerable. It would have been a display of grace, rich grace, to bestow upon us all the glories of Paradise for ten thousand ages, and then to extinguish our existence for ever. Had we never heard of eternal life, and had this been presented to us as the object of christian desire and expectation, we should have considered it as a manifestation of abounding favour. But for sinners that had deserved hell to have such a hope as ours, the hope of everlasting life, with all that can make existence a blessing; to have a hope founded on the incarnation, sufferings, and death of the Son of God; to be brought by the new creating power of God into the possession of this hope; is it not a display of grace which will fill the universe with astonishment, and our eternity with wonder and with praise?

A Lively Hope.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."

In this very comprehensive and beautiful passage, the apostle Peter, like his brother Paul in the commencement of his epistle to the Ephesians, introduces his subject by bursting abruptly into a hymn of thanksgiving. His heart was full to overflowing of wonder, gratitude, and love, and he could not content himself with a mere cold formal statement of the marvellous grace of God. He first ascends to the source of the blessings

he was about to enumerate, and finds it only in the abundant mercy of God. There is no attribute of God on which as sinners we so much depend as upon mercy; and there is not one therefore about which so much is said in Scripture as this. Mercy is the spring and fountain head of the blessings here enumerated, our regeneration and adoption into the family of God, our heavenly inheritance, and our conservation to the vast and eternal possession. It is the lively hope, however, that is the subject of our present remarks. To this we are "begotten," that is, we are first made children, and then, as such, being endowed with an eternal inheritance, we, as children, being entitled to it, through the work of Christ, hope for it. And to this we are begotten "by the resurrection of Christ." In an earlier part of this work I have shewn that hope must be preceded by faith, and is founded upon it. We must first believe that there is a heaven, and that it is obtainable by us, or we cannot hope for it; and if we do believe this, we must of necessity hope for it. Whatever therefore produces and strengthens faith must beget hope. The resurrection of Christ is the sum and substance of the evidence of the divinity of his mission, of the truth of his doctrines, and of course of the gospel of our salvation. It is a cloud of witnesses in itself, and therefore believing this great fact, we are, through the grace of God, brought to hope. But more than this, the resurrection of Christ is the proof and pledge of ours. Believing in his resurrection, we believe our own; for he rose not as a private individual, but as our representative. Thus our faith is confirmed, established, supported by his resurrection, and we are begotten to a lively hope.

But I intend now to dwell on this characteristic of our hope: that it is a lively, or, as it signifies, "a living" hope. True personal religion is the opposite of the unregenerate state, which is a state of spiritual death; the unconverted sinner is "dead in trespasses and sins." Hence religion is spiritual life. It is a living, moving, acting principle in man's soul. He has been quickened from a death of sin to a life of holiness. His religious exercises are not the motions of an automaton, but the self-moved actions of a living being. His soul is alive to God, to Christ, to holiness, to heaven. Now just as in the tree each branch, leaf, and fruit, lives by the principle of vegetable life in the root; and as in the body, the principle of animal life diffuses its influence into all the members and organs; as the foot moves, the hand works, the eye sees, and the tongue speaks by the principle of animal life; so, as regards religion, all its graces act from the spiritual life in the soul; faith is a living faith, hope is a living hope, love is a living love. The apostle, it is true, speaks of a dead faith, but this indeed is no faith at all; so we may speak of a dead hope, which is none at all. If there be in reality a hope, it must be a living one. Nearly all people in Christian lands profess to have hope, but in multitudes of cases it is a dead one; it breathes not, moves not, speaks not; it neither makes them holy nor happy; it neither animates to duty, restrains from sin, nor supports under suffering. It is a mere profession. Is it not much to be feared that this is all that many professors of religion, many members of our churches, have? I would not be uncharitable, but I must express my apprehensions, fearful as they are, that large numbers in this day of easy profession, have nothing but a dead faith and a dead

hope. Their profession, instead of being the garment of a living man, is the shroud of a dead one. Judging from their conduct we must conclude that they have neither desire nor expectation of eternal life. Professor, let me ask you what does your hope do for you? Consider it is not the hope of a trifle, which must be a trifling hope, exciting no emotion, producing no action, awakening no anxiety. It is the hope of salvation, of eternal life, of immortal glory. Can such an expectation, if it really exist, lie dormant in the soul, an ineffective, inoperative thing, producing no joy, no anxiety, no activity? Impossible. Let every one, therefore, solemnly ask himself this simple question, What does my anticipation of heaven do for me? Is it alive in me? Does it stimulate me to duty, restrain me from sin, comfort me in trouble? Are my character and conduct in any degree those of a man who has fixed his eye, his heart, his expectation, on eternal life? If not, my hope is a dead one, a name and a delusion.

In opposition to this, the hope of a really converted man is a living one. The word signifies a vigorous, active, spirit-stirring principle, as opposed to the cold, faint belief of Heathenism, aye, even of Judaism. It is an earnest desire and confident expectation of everlasting life. Such a desire and expectation as employs the thoughts and kindles the affections. It acts on the soul, as regards spiritual and eternal objects, as earthly desires and expectations do in respect of their objects. If a man be looking forward with confident expectation to some great earthly good, some cherished object, which is to influence all his future life, it is uppermost in his mind, it engages his heart, it employs his tongue, it stimulates his activity. If he receive some lesser good,

"Oh," he says, "but I have something far greater to come." If he has sustained a loss, he replies, "I shall soon have ample compensation for this." If he is in trouble, he cheers his mind with the anticipation of the expected good. If solicited to engage in any project which would divert his mind from this, he exclaims, "No. I cannot allow anything to interfere with my one great object." This is a living hope. And so is it with the man who has really set his heart upon salvation and eternal life.

I am ready to admit that it is with spiritual life as it is with natural, it may exist in various degrees. There may be vitality where there is not vivacity. There may be life so feeble as scarcely to be perceived or felt, and there may be vitality in such vigour as to give rise to the expression, "He is full of life." In reference to the two terms, "living" and "lively," a hope may, in a very modified sense, be a living one, yet not a lively one; and on that account I am almost ready to prefer the word employed by our translators to its proposed substitute. The original comprehends both. If there are some professors whose graces, and this among the rest, are not living, in any sense, I am sure there are many whose state of mind is not lively. They have desires, but how lukewarm; and expectations, but how uncertain and fluttering! They do not give up the idea of their being Christians, and reaching heaven at last; but amidst what doubts and fears are these expectations indulged! In duty, how backward; in spirit, how worldly; in trouble, how disconsolate! How deficient they are in spirituality and heavenly-mindedness! O, ye half-hearted, worldly-minded, lukewarm professors, I call upon you "to strengthen the things that remain, and

are ready to die." You have only that measure of life which is akin to death, and is in peril of becoming dead. Believers, be contented with nothing short of a lively as as well as living expectation, which shall be an unfailing source of both consolation and holiness; which will lift up your head, and keep it up, when passing through the rivers of affliction; which will remain, when every thing else will be gone; which will open a fountain amidst broken cisterns; which will live in death, and exhibit heaven to your eye in the dark valley; and which judgment and eternity will not destroy, but only consummate. Let the full tide of spiritual life be poured into this, as one of the many channels through which its holy stream is to flow.

Patient Hope.

"Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Thes. i, 3. It is striking and interesting to observe the various combinations of christian graces which are presented to us in many places by the sacred writers, like so many different precious stones in a bracelet, so many flowers in a bouquet, or so many stars in a constellation; each lending its separate beauty to form a resplendent whole. How impressive is that rich chain in 2 Peter i, 5; or Gal. v, 22; or 1 Cor. xiii, 13. The passage now under consideration differs from the last of those referred to, in the order in which the graces stand. Here, it is faith, love, hope: there, hope is put second: and a supplemental and appropriate operation is here ascribed to each, which is left out in Corinthians. The same order as here, is shown also in Thessalonians. This latter collocation is in more exact

accordance with the nature and relations of the Christian's life: hope is mentioned last, because it is the nearest connecting link between this world and that which is to come. These three virtues are each represented, as I have said, by an epithet which is intended to exhibit them in their practical exercise. We have "the work of faith." This does not mean that faith is God's work in the soul. It is so; but that is not the truth expressed here. It must be explained by the analogy of the other two virtues; and as the epithet in connection with them represents their practical operation, so it must be here. "The work of faith," must mean a working faith. Its best explanation will be found in the second chapter of the epistle of James. In some other places, as 1 Cor. xvi, 13; 1 Tim. vi, 12; 2 Tim. iv, 7, it is represented as a fighting virtue, just as here it is a working one; both implying great exertion. Every representation of this holy principle makes it an active one. Faith is not an idle, passive, inoperative assent, but a vigorous and impulsive conviction. It is not the state of mind, in which a man perceiving the evidence of a matter of science, reposes upon it, without farther desire or effort; but that of a man, who, believing a report that he may obtain some benefit, rouses himself to put forth every effort to secure it. "Shew me thy faith without thy works," exclaims the true believer, "and I will shew thee my faith by my works." May I illustrate it by a reference to the steam engine? Faith is the steam in the cylinder, which sets all the machinery in motion.

"The labour of love" explains itself. Faith works by love; and love works in all the various ways set forth with such exquisite beauty and elegance in Paul's

personification of charity. The apostle has used a strong term, in application to love, by calling it the "labour," of love. Love stirs up the whole soul to energetic, vigorous, and persevering action. This operation of love is in substance the same as that which is ascribed to faith, only here it is intensified by a still stronger term; "labour" being a more emphatic word than "work." Love is the most powerful impulse to action that the soul knows. What will not the mother do for her child, the wife for her husband, the lover for the object of his affection? How beautifully the expression, "labour of love," chimes in with all our instincts and our experience. Oh! what an illustration of this we have in the incarnation, life, sufferings, and death of our Lord. There was a labour of love which is a pattern for us, and which will fill the universe with wonder and delight.

But it is "the patience of hope," to which this section is principally devoted. And is there any characteristic of this grace more obvious than patience? When our hearts are strongly set upon an object, is there any effort too great to make for its possession, any length of time too long to wait, any disappointment too severe to endure, as long as one ray of hope remains unextinguished? How often have we been struck with this, in observing the conduct of our fellow creatures, in reference to some worldly object on which their hearts were entirely set! We have seen them working, waiting, and watching, led on by some glimmering light, which to every eye but their own was a meteoric delusion; never relaxing their efforts, nor intermitting their expectations, long after all around them saw that the object they pursued must for ever elude their grasp.

A very striking illustration of this was seen in the conduct of the crew of the ill-fated ship, the Central America, and a writer in a Transatlantic journal has employed it in illustration of the patience of christian hope: "For thirty-six hours they lived on hope. On Friday noon the leak was made known, and all hands began to bale out the engine-room. They went to work calmly and systematically, hoping to conquer the water there, and thus to regain their steam-power. Till eight o'clock that evening they worked steadily at this one point; regained their steam only to lose it finally. Still all night long the gangs of weary men worked with good spirits, in the hope that the morning would bring relief. And when toward morning their strength began to fail, and the water to increase in the hold, hope was renewed by a lull of the gale, and the assurance of an experienced captain that the ship would hold out. 'Every passenger remained cool, and seemed to forget his danger in the united efforts to save the vessel. There was no weeping or exhibition of despair.' All Saturday morning they keep on baling, though the storm increases and the vessel fills. At noon the clouds begin to break; hope revives, and 'all work like giants.' Two hours later a sail appears; then hope bursts into joy. Another vessel heaves in sight; and though night is coming on, the hope of help sustains all hearts. With the calmness and patience that hope alone can impart, they first provide for the weak and the helpless, and though the daylight wanes, they still hope for the returning boats till the fatal lurch of the sinking ship leaves five hundred men upon the waves. Yet even then hope does not desert them. Through the darkness of the night, the flashes of lightning

reveal to each his struggling comrades; and each cheers his fellow with the hope of rescue from vessels hovering near. At length when one by one, scores and hundreds have gone down for ever, a solitary swimmer descries in the dim dawn a vessel a mile away. For six hours he has floated on the sea, but the sight gives courage to his will, and strength to his arms. Almost exhausted he reaches her side, and is drawn on board of her by ropes, 'saved by hope.'" So let it be with us in reference even to the affairs of this world. Are we engaged in some lawful enterprise; some matter of unquestionable obligation; some pursuit, of the lawfulness of which we can no more doubt, than we can of our very existence; then let us hold on our way amidst all difficulties, delays, and disappointments, sustained by the power, and exhibiting "the patience of hope." There may appear but dim lights to cheer even ourselves, and to others there may be nothing but thick darkness, impervious to a single beam, but till the last ray is extinguished in black night, let us never yield to the paralysing influence of despair. Many have given up the pursuit when within a few steps of gaining the desired object. A little more patience would have put them in possession of all they sought.

And if this be true in reference to temporal things, it is equally true in reference to spiritual matters. Are we struggling in the great work of sanctification with some besetting sin, some strong corruption, some powerful enemy, and carrying on the conflict amidst many sad defeats, many humbling disappointments, many mortifying relapses, till we are ready to give up all for lost, and despondingly to say, "I shall yet perish by the hand of Saul?" Let hope come to our rescue, and pa-

tience keep up our hope. We must struggle; it is a life and death conflict. If we give up, we are lost. There is hope. God will assist us. He has promised to make his grace sufficient for us. If defeated ten times, ten times we must return to the conflict. Recollect the story of Robert Bruce and the spider, how, when frequently defeated, he was sinking into despondency, and saw the little insect, after many abortive attempts to swing herself from one place to another, succeed at last. Patience in this case was victorious. It roused him from his despondency, called up the same spirit of endurance and resolution in him, and he too was saved by it. And thus must it also be in the commencement of the great business of eternal salvation. The awakened sinner does not always come at once into the light and liberty of the gospel, or to the full measure of hope, or of faith, or even of understanding. He is like Bunyan's Pilgrim, heavily laden with the burden of his sins, and falls into the Slough of Despond, and, after floundering long in its miry depths, often feels half inclined to get out on the wrong side; and even after escaping from this danger, does not immediately find his way to the cross of Christ. He prays, he reads, he hears; he mortifies his corruptions, and puts away his sins, but he is not at peace, and is ready to give all up in despair. If any such shall read these pages, to him I say, "Do not despond: hope on. You are near the cross; look up, there it is. There is the Saviour, the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world. I do not bid you wait. There is no reason why you should not this moment believe and rejoice. But should it be that from any remaining ignorance, any cloud upon your mind, you do not see the glorious object of faith,

do not give up the matter, but in the patience of hope struggle against your doubts and fears, your false views and false reasonings, your unbelief and self-righteousness, and come to the Saviour who waits to receive you."

And let the timid believer, a feeble and fainting soul, often cast down by reason of the difficulties of the way, and alarmed at his own weakness, keep up his expectation, and let his expectation keep up his patience, and let his hope and patience keep up his endeavours. It may be "with fear and trembling," but still let him work out his own salvation, depending upon Him who worketh in him to will and to do according to his good pleasure.

To the afflicted believer who may have lost his all by some sudden reverse of circumstances, I say, when we have been shipwrecked, when the storm rages over us, and we struggle in the deep, if we have only a good hope through grace of a better inheritance, we shall emerge at last, though but one solitary plank of worldly substance be left us. The hour of deliverance will come to all who maintain the patience of hope in Jesus Christ. But this patience must have its perfect work, and must be attended with the work of faith and labour of love.

In connection with this passage, we must take up another. I mean Rom. v, 3-4, "We glory in tribulation also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience; patience, experience; and experience, hope." The connexion of christian graces with each other, and their operation in the way of producing one another, are beautifully set forth in this passage; they are like the parts of jointed plants, growing one out of another. The apostle states it as a great and blessed privilege of

Christians, that they not only rejoice in the hope of glory, but "glory in tribulations also:" on account, not of course of the tribulations themselves, but of their influence and effects; just as we may rejoice in some present privation, toil, suffering, or perplexity; not for its own sake, for they are all very painful in their nature, but because of some great temporal advantage to be derived from it. We can easily understand the reality and the reasonableness of rejoicing in present temporary evil, for the sake of future and permanent good. What was the good which made the apostle glory in tribulation? "Tribulation worketh patience." It must be borne in mind here, as I have already said, that patience includes the idea of perseverance as well as endurance. Not of itself does tribulation work patience, for naturally it tends to produce impatience and fretfulness, and to make a man abandon his plans, and sacrifice his own interest. The production of patience by affliction is the work of God's grace in the soul, keeping in subjection our natural tendency to repine and rebel. It is a proof of God's power, wisdom, and love to his people, that he places them in circumstances in which he enables them to exercise one of the most difficult of all graces; thus assisting them to glorify him, and secure to themselves a great reward. If there were no tribulation, there could be no patience, and if no patience, no reward. Yes, this is the only world in which patience can be exercised; there is none in heaven, for there is no suffering there; none in hell, for there is no hope there. Hence it is really an honour, and, if we look to the end and issue, a privilege, to be called to suffer. The apostle James represents patience as the perfection

of the christian character, "Let patience have its perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, lacking nothing."

"Patience worketh experience." The word translated "experience" signifies "trial," or "proof." This is usually understood to mean proof of God's power, faithfulness, and love, in bestowing his grace upon the Christian, according to his gracious promise, for support, consolation, and perseverance. And what afflicted Christian who has trusted in God, has not had proof abundant of divine support? What a testimony of God's interposition his children can bear who have been enabled patiently to endure and persevere! Still, this does not appear to be the meaning here. I think the "trial," or "proof," is that of the afflicted Christian's own state. Patience worketh "proof" of the sincerity, stedfastness, and strength of his faith. Tribulation is the test of godliness; the furnace, the fire of which reveals the nature of the substances cast into it, whether it is gold or dross, or, if mixed, how much there is of each. This is "the fire which is to try every man's work, of what sort it is." To this another apostle refers, when he says, "That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold which perisheth, might be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ." Tribulation makes, in many cases, sad discoveries of the want of true faith, and in others it makes revelations no less delightful. Many a believer who feared as he entered the cloud, has emerged from it with joy and thanksgiving, for the knowledge of his state which he gained while passing through it.

"Experience worketh hope." It naturally and neces-

sarily leads to an increase of this grace, not of course by changing or strengthening our foundation, but by showing us that we have really built upon it, and are going on to the possession of its glorious object. Experience in this view of it leads on to assurance. The sufferers who, in the days of persecution, gave up property, liberty, friends, and even life itself, for Christ, could stand in no doubt of the sincerity of their faith, or of their personal interest in the blessings of salvation. Amidst their fiery trials, their faith glowed like gold in the crucible, and proclaimed its own existence and nature. So now also, the tried believer, who with deep submission, unmurmuring acquiescence, and holy peace, can patiently bear the will of God, has proof of his personal faith, and may unfeignedly rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

Purifying Hope.

The apostle John has set this quality and operation before us in a clear and positive manner: "Every man that hath this hope in him, (i.e., in Christ,) purifieth himself, even as he is pure." 1 John iii, 3. Every view we can take of the work of redemption, shows its connection with holiness. The Father has "chosen us before the foundation of the world, that we might be holy." The Son did not become incarnate merely to save us from hell, and bring us to heaven; but to "redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." The Spirit is given to "create us anew unto good works." If we are called, it is "with a holy calling;" if we are afflicted, that we might "be partakers of God's holiness;" if we possess the Scriptures, "that we might be sanctified

by the truth." Holiness was the image of God, stamped upon man's soul at his creation, which Satan marred, when his malignity could not reach the divine original; and to restore it is the ultimate object of redeeming mercy. What would justification be without holiness, but like throwing a vestment of purple and gold over a leprous body? What is heaven, but the region, the home, the very centre of holiness? Take away holiness from an angel and he becomes a devil; add holiness to the nature of a devil and he becomes an angel. Were a man without holiness to enter heaven, its blessed inhabitants would retire from him with horror and alarm, as we should on earth from a person suffering from the plague. Without holiness a soul in heaven would be like a man with a fever at a feast; he could touch nothing, taste nothing, relish nothing. Hence therefore the meaning and force of the apostle's declaration, that hope is the great purifier. Fear of hell may do something in this way; hope of heaven will do more.

The model of Christian holiness is Christ, not merely in his divine, but in his human nature; and that nature, not only in its heavenly, but in its earthly state; Christ as the man of sorrows; as exposed to temptation; as subject to affliction; as the servant of God; as the Son learning obedience by the things which he suffered; as separate from sin and sinners, though dwelling in the midst of them. Here is our model; the infinite, eternal, almighty God, exhibited in the miniature form of the perfect man, presented in dimensions which the eye can comprehend. In our zeal for Christ's divinity, let us not forget his humanity. The man Christ, the divine man, the model man, must be before us, and our eye must be ever upon our copy and our page.

"Every man that hath this hope purifieth himself." While as a weak, ignorant, and sinful creature, his dependence is to be upon the Spirit of God; as a rational one, he is to exert all his faculties of intellect, heart, will, conscience, memory, in the great work of moral purification. The apostle teaches us in this language that each individual's moral cleansing depends, under God, principally upon himself; not upon ministers, or sermons, or ordinances, or books, but upon himself; upon his care to watch over the motions of his own heart, upon his vigilance to guard against temptations from without; upon his meditation upon Christ's example; upon his assiduity to seek, by prayer, the succour of God's grace. A man that would clean his person would not merely place himself beneath a falling shower of rain, but would collect the descending water and apply it to his body. He would take trouble and bestow labour for the purpose, and we must do as much for our souls.

Hope prompts to this; helps us in it; and gives energy and success to our endeavours. All men act according as they hope; their desires and expectations dictate and ensure appropriate conduct. This is an instinct of their nature, a moral necessity, an infallible result. If a man have before him any worldly object of desire and expectation, and there be some pre-requisite which he must possess in order to gain his ulterior end, he will labour to secure this sine qua non. Now the Christian's desire and expectation are fixed upon heaven, his heart is upon it: but he is told "without holiness no man shall see the Lord." Then he knows, he feels, he determines, that he must be holy. If we have some cherished object of desire, and there

is something which must meeten us for enjoying it when it is possessed, we naturally labour to gain that preparedness. The Christian knows that he could not without holiness enjoy heaven, if he were admitted to its felicities, and therefore his hope sets him upon this personal purification as his "meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light." The desire and expectation of an earthly object make us eager at once to get as much of it as we can, even before we come into full possession and fruition of it. The Christian knows that the chief felicity of heaven consists in absolute sinless perfection. It is his bliss to think that there he shall, according to his measure, be "holy as God is holy." It would be no heaven to him if he could carry sin with him. Holiness is the richest, ripest fruit that grows on the tree of life, in the midst of the paradise of God. The believer's hope therefore prompts him to hunger and thirst after righteousness, as a means of enjoying an earnest, a foretaste of heavenly bliss. Hope like the true hearted spies sent by Joshua to search the promised land, crosses the Jordan, and plucking the grapes of Eshcol, returns to bid the soul go forward. When we are intent on gaining an object, we are very glad to meet with evidence that we are in the right way to obtain it, and we search very diligently for as much proof of this as we can obtain. What is the evidence, the only evidence, that can be depended on that we are going to heaven? Holiness, conformity to the example of Christ. Now he who is in earnest to reach the heavenly Canaan, whose heart is set on that sublime and glorious object, will feel an intense solicitude to know if he is in the way to it. A serious doubt on this subject will be distressing to him: knowing that holi-

ness is the proof of safety, he will ever be anxious to conform himself to the example of Christ. He who is studying the life of Jesus, as a child studies his copy to do something like it, need not doubt his state. He may not, and will not, be a perfect resemblance to Christ, any more than the boy at school will equal his copy: but the great Master will approve of the sincere and diligent attempt to do well, although there may be some defects, dissimilarities, and irregularities.

Nor is this all; the very contemplation of heaven, in which hope indulges, has a transforming power. This passion naturally and necessarily assimilates the mind of the person who cherishes it, to the object which he has before him. The miser becomes more miserly, the sensualist more sensual, the ambitious man more ambitious, the warrior more warlike, by their hopes. Desire and expectation, in relation to earthly things, have a mighty power of assimilation, and may be carried to such an extent as to produce monomania; so that the man's soul becomes quite possessed with the object on which his heart is set. So is it, in rational measure, with the expectants of eternal glory. What is heaven? I have again and again answered that question. It is not a Roman Elysium or a Mohammedan Paradise, but a state where we shall see Christ as he is, and be like him. It is the region of moral purity. Its society is holy, a holy God, a holy Saviour, holy angels, and holy men. Its occupations are holy, the service of God, the song of cherubim and seraphim, crying, Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty; and all other things in harmony with this sacred employment and felicity. And every contemplation of this state tends to assimilate the soul to its likeness. While

gazing upon it, delighting in it, longing for it, we grow in resemblance to it. As when a man turns his face to the sun, its rays fall and dwell upon his countenance; or as when a polished mirror is turned to the great luminary, it reflects its splendour; so the soul of the believer, turned heavenwards, becomes heavenly.

If, then, hope produces holiness, how important is it to keep up the power of the cause, in order to the production of the effect. Despondency has a chilling, withering influence upon the holy energies of the soul, like the east wind on flowers and blossoms; while hope is the sunshine of the soul, which cherishes the moral vegetation, and makes it look verdant and flourishing. The Christian who would grow in grace, and make advances in spiritual purity, should keep up a good hope. His doubts and fears are not only hindrances to his happiness, but to his holiness also. Despondency is not only uncomfortable, but unholy.

A Hope that maketh not Ashamed.

"Hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which he hath given to us." Romans v, 6. This is a high commendation of the grace I am now considering; one that by contrast will come home to the heart of every believer. It is a peculiarity which can be scarcely affirmed of any other expectation. Can the man of wealth, of pleasure, or of ambition, say this of the object of his pursuit and possession? Perhaps the apostle, when he wrote this passage, thought of that declaration of the Psalmist. "Our fathers trusted in thee, and were not confounded." It is the true wisdom of faith to strengthen itself by making a

discreet, yet bold and unhesitating, use of the experience of others. Especially should the children of the godly, in their religious course and conflicts, apply for their encouragement what their pious ancestors have testified, and, in pleading with God, make use of his dealings with them as a ground of confidence for themselves.

There are three, and but three, grounds on which men can be ashamed of their hopes:

I. When in better states of mind, and in clearer views of the subject, they find that they have desired, and perhaps have obtained, a wrong thing; a thing which no right-minded man ought to have coveted and sought. How large a portion of man's earthly desires and expectations are fixed on objects which religion, reason, and conscience, at length tell them are forbidden by God! It is awful to think what a preponderance of human energy, in many men's pursuits, is going forth after illicit gains and pleasures. In some few cases, (alas, how few!) they are at last brought to see their iniquity, and to blush over it. They discover, to their shame and confusion, that they had been kindling unhallowed fires in their soul, and, like Balaam, resolutely going forward in a forbidden path. Oh, the confusion, humiliation, and deep compunction which some have felt in looking back upon past objects of desire and expectation! Bad hopes have caused bitter tears to myriads. It is of course a mercy to find out that they were bad, and to abandon them; but how much greater a mercy never to have had them. And this is the climax of mercy to know, as the Christian does, that his is a "good hope." His desires and expectations are indulged under the approving smile of religion, reason, and conscience. Who ever blushed

for his hope of heaven? Let the Christian raise his desires to the greatest intensity, let him carry his expectations up to the highest pitch, he never need to check his ardour; he never need to say, "Am I right in all this? May I not yet be ashamed of having thought, and felt, and wished, and laboured so earnestly?"

2. Men are ashamed of hopes that end in utter disappointment: and how many do so? Of the objects of earthly pursuit, how many turn out to be mere shadows? Think what millions every day sit down in grief and dismay, amidst the wreck of shattered schemes, and then lay their heads at night upon their pillows, to pass the sleepless hours of silence and darkness, in ruminating upon defeated purposes and frustrated expectations. How much of human grief arises from this source. True it is, that in multitudes of these cases, men are the victims of folly, as well as of disappointment. They had been employed in building castles in the air. Their desires were the offspring of unauthorised ambition, and their expectations had no other basis than their own wild imaginations. Observers saw, if they did not, that there was no probability in their prospects; their hopes were the speculations of their fancy, like those of the Persian mentioned in my first chapter, and they therefore deserved the disappointment they experienced. But this does not apply to all. Even those who are most moderate in their desires, and most sober in their expectations, who have reason, religion, and conscience on their side, and are thus justified both by God and man in their schemes, even they are doomed oftentimes

to disappointment. It is said of God in dealing with us, "He disappointeth the hope of man." I admit that, in such cases, there may be no shame felt for the object selected, or the means used; no consciousness of guilt, no blushing for folly; but still, in a mitigated and figurative sense, even such persons are ashamed of their hopes.

This will not apply to the Christian. No disappointment awaits him. He, in his expectations of life eternal, is building no castles in the air. His is "a sure and certain hope." Its foundation is the work of Christ, the promise and oath of God. Should he even be mistaken in his faith, should he have been following only cunningly devised fables in resting his belief on the gospel of Christ; should he sink at death into annihilation, even in that case, he will not live to blush; he will have no existence, and therefore have no consciousness of disappointment. But this is a mere negative view of the subject. The gospel is not a cunningly devised fable, but a divine revelation; he will live, and will realise his expectation, and have his desires gratified. No, no; wherever else there is disappointment, there will be none here. His most assured earthly expectations may fail; what appear to be substances may be only shadows; what seem to be stars may be only meteors. But this awaits not the Christian in respect of religion. Heaven is no mere speculation. It is a glorious certainty. All the evidences of Christianity, as a revelation from God, sustain his anticipations. Doubts and fears sometimes now, like fleecy clouds passing over the sun's disc, occasionally throw their shadows on his path, and for a

little while darken his prospect, but even these will all vanish, and the whole scene of heavenly glory shine out in cloudless and eternal splendour.

3. But there is another cause of men's being ashamed of their earthly hopes, and that is, the disproportion between the expectation and the fruition of them. How far short, in most cases, does the reality fall of the anticipation. "Hope tells a flattering tale," and always looks at its object through a magnifying medium, and usually one of high power, and paints it also in colours supplied rather by the imagination than the judgment. To him who surveys a prospect from an eminence, everything looks beautiful, the cottage and the homestead are all picturesque; but how different an aspect do they wear when surveyed near at hand, with the dirty heaps, broken windows, and shattered doors, and other signs of poverty, which distance had hidden from view. So is it with our hopes. "Distance lends enchantment to the scene," which usually dissolves on a near approach. How few of our expectations have been realised up to their full extent. How often, when we have gained the object of desire and pursuit, have we exclaimed, with surprise and grief, "And is this all? O thou gay deceiver, how hast thou beguiled and cheated me! Are all thy promises come to this?" In ordinary cases this is true, and in some, it is absolutely afflictive. How much time, strength, energy, and money have been sometimes expended upon an object of desire; what expectations have been indulged; what bright visions have been raised; what blissful anticipations have been let loose; what large calculations of coming enjoyment have been made, and all to issue in the sad

confession, "And this is all!" Must not a man in such a case be ashamed of his hope?

Again, I triumphantly say, "This will never happen to the Christian," when he reaches heaven. He will never have to say, "And is this all?" The Queen of Sheba, when she saw the glory of Solomon, confessed with delighted surprised, "That the half had not been told her." And the glorified spirit will declare that a thousandth part had not been told him. A thousandth part of heaven would a thousand times more than compensate for all the time, energy, and strength spent in seeking after it. Could it be obtained in no other way, and could be obtained in this, a thousand martyrdoms, successively endured, would be a cheap purchase of "the inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away." If there be shame in heaven, it will not be that our hopes were so high, but that they were so low; not that we expected too much, but too little. How will it surprise us as we walk the golden streets, that we could, with such a prospect before us, dwell so little upon it! No taunt will be thrown at us from any quarter, "See what your hope has come to: do you not blush to compare the reality with the expectation?"

But now dwell upon the reasoning of the apostle, as well as upon his assertion, "Hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost, which he hath given to us." The "love of God" is an ambiguous phrase, and means, in some places, God's love to us, and in others, our love to God. Commentators are divided in opinion, as to which of these the apostle refers to in this passage. By a pro-

per explanation, I think both may be included. When a person loves us, and is kind to us, he sheds abroad upon us his love, by conferring upon us its fruits. His love remains in himself; it is its gifts that are bestowed upon us, and yet in common parlance, we say he has bestowed much love upon us. God sheds abroad his love in our hearts, by giving us the Holy Spirit. Now the Spirit of God by his work in us, gives us assurance that our hope will never make us ashamed; and he does this in two ways. First, by giving us a foretaste and pledge of the heavenly inheritance, and a meetness for it. He imparts such a bright view, and such a deep sense, of God's love to us, and thus so fills the heart with joy unspeakable, as to convince the soul, from its happiness in this world, that in the full enjoyment of this love in heaven, there will be no disappointment. Some believers, John Howe, Halyburton, and Payson, as I have shewn, and others, have had a perception and sense of God's love, in itself and in its gifts, so vivid, as to lead them to say, "No, this cannot be delusion, this frame of mind must be God's work; and if, in this world of ignorance, earthliness, and imperfection, there is such happiness, what will heaven be, where the sun of God's love will pour upon my happy spirit its full effulgence, without any intervening clouds?"

Then the work of the Holy Spirit is not only to reveal God's love to us, but to produce in us love to God in return. "We love him," said the apostle, "because he first loved us." In ordinary cases, love generally produces love. It always does in this. Whenever the Holy Spirit really gives a clear view and deep sense of God's love to us, he, by the same operation of his grace, subdues the enmity of the carnal mind, and produces a

genuine and supreme love to God. And who, that knows the reality and power of this divine passion, does not know that it is heaven begun? Christian reader, have there not been moments in your experience, when love to God has been so fervid in your soul, when the heaven-kindled flame has burnt so strongly, as to compel you to say, "If heaven, as I am taught, is to consist, so far as its subjective happiness is concerned, in the perfect love of God, I feel assured, from what I now experience, that there I can never be ashamed of my hope."

And then there is another way in which the work of God's Spirit assures us that we shall never be ashamed of our hope, and that is, it strengthens our faith in the divine origin and truth of the gospel. I have already shewn how faith and hope operate on each other. The former must of course be considered as the originator and sustainer of the latter; but then the latter may strengthen the former by re-acting upon it. Among the evidences of the truth of Christianity, the experimental one is, to many persons, the strongest, and to all really converted persons, it carries great weight: "He that believeth, hath the witness in himself." Dr. Chalmers truly says, "That in the course of the believer's pilgrimage, never does the hope of experience supersede the hope of faith. So far from this, in the very proportion that experience grows in breadth, does faith grow in brightness. And it is this last, which still constitutes the sheet anchor of the soul, and forms the main element of its peace, and joy, and righteousness. It is well that in looking inwardly upon himself, he sees the growing lineaments of such a grace and such a character forming upon his person, as vouch him to be ripening for eter-

nity. But along with this process, he will look outwardly upon God in Christ, and there see, in constantly increasing manifestation, the truth, and mercy, and the unchangeableness of his reconciled Father: by far the firmest and stablest guarantee of his future destiny. The same agent, in fact, who brings about the one effect, brings about the other. He causes you not merely to see yourself to be an epistle of the Spirit of God, and to read therein the works of your personal interest in the promises; but he also causes you to see the promises, as standing in the outward record, invested with a light, and an honesty, and a freeness, which you did not see at the first revelation of them." Thus the good works, and the graces of personal religion, which are the fruits of the Spirit, not merely supply you with a foretaste of heaven, and assure you that it will exceed all your highest and happiest attainments now; but they cast back a reflected light on the faith from which they emanated, and equally convince you of the certainty as well as greatness of that celestial state. So that God's love to us, revealed by the light of the Spirit; and our love to God, produced by the same divine agent, assure us we shall never be ashamed of our anticipations of heaven.

The Harmony between Hope and Fear.

All the affections of the soul have their opposites; such as love and hatred, joy and grief, hope and fear. These, though seemingly antagonistic, can work harmoniously, and sometimes, as in the case before us, to accomplish the same object. There are many passages, as this treatise proves, in which the believer is called upon to hope, to hope perfectly, to have the

full assurance of hope, and yet there are as many in which he is as earnestly called upon to fear. To say nothing of the texts of the Old Testament, which was a system of bondage and fear, there are many to the same effect in the New Testament, under which we have "not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but the spirit of power, of love, and of a sound mind." "Work out your salvation," said the apostle, "with fear and trembling." "Let us fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it." "Pass the time of your sojourning here in fear." Very many others might be selected, but these will suffice to show that fear, as well as hope, is a christian grace, and a grace to be exercised not only by the unconverted, but the converted man; not only by the man without hope, but by the man who has hope. Now as these two are antagonistic in their nature, how can they be exercised by the same individual, in reference to the same object? Does not perfect hope, as well as perfect love, cast out fear? Certainly. But then it must be perfect love in one case, and perfect hope in the other. "God has wisely ordained that these two opposite principles of love and fear should rise and fall like the two opposite scales of a balance, when one rises the other sinks. Light and darkness unavoidably succeed each other; if light prevails, so much does darkness cease, and no more; and if light decay, so much does darkness prevail. So it is in the heart of a child of God; if divine love decay, and fall asleep, the light and joy of hope go out, and dark fear arises; and if, on the contrary, divine love prevail and come into lively exercise, this brings in the brightness of hope, and drives away black fear before it."*

* Jonathan Edwards.

Another of our old divines represents the matter thus: "Fear and hope in the soul of a Christian are like the cork and lead to a net; the cork keeps it from sinking, and the lead keeps it from too much floating; so it is here, fear keeps hope from degenerating into presumption, and hope keeps fear from sinking into despair. If you do abstract fear from hope, the soul will be lazy; and if you abstract hope from fear, it will sink into despondency. Therefore there must be fear with hope."*

Let us, however, examine this a little further. Can any hope, however strong and assured, altogether exclude fear? Certainly not. And the greater the object, the greater will be the liability to fear. To be totally without fear is the condition of possession and fruition. A man in the pursuit of an earthly object, however confident he may be of ultimately possessing it, must admit, theoretically at least, the possibility, if not the probability, of his losing it. The thought must, and does, occasionally cross his mind, that after all he may be disappointed, and the consequences of disappointment must be at the same time present to his thoughts. This fear may be, and is, far less than his hope; it may not materially lessen the assurance of his mind that he shall succeed, but it is there, and it is useful to him, for it keeps him in action, it sustains as well as prompts his exertion. So is it in the divine life. As long as heaven is an object of hope, and not the subject of possession, there must be some degree of fear mingled with that hope. And this proves that even the full assurance of hope does not mean, as I have shown, a man's being as certain of reaching heaven at last as

* Dr. Bates, vol. iii, 185, 8vo. Edition.

if he were already in it. The christian hope, like the christian love, when it is perfect, does exclude fear. But what fear? That which has torment; the servile spirit of bondage, which, like a spectre, is ever haunting and terrifying the imagination, filling the soul with such trembling forebodings of wrath to come, as prevent all joy and peace in believing. This is the fear which both love and hope shut out, and keep out, from the soul; a fear that is ever trembling under an apprehension of an angry God and a coming hell; a fear that upon every fresh discovery of sin, and every fresh sense of guilt, is thrown into despondency and wrapped in darkness; a fear that, under every new sight of spiritual enemies, difficulties, and dangers, and every new consciousness of weakness, sinks into a paroxysm of despairing helplessness; a fear that turns more frequently to the threatening of God's Word than to his promises; that is more frequently on Sinai than on Calvary, and is more apt to dwell upon the torments of hell than the felicities of heaven; such a fear is the spirit of bondage, which is decidedly opposed to the spirit of adoption, and shows that the soul is not yet brought into the liberty wherewith Christ makes his people free. This fear hope does cast out. But it does not cast out the fear that produces reverence and caution, that makes its subject watchful against sin, and, in a modified and chastened sense, afraid of coming short of the heavenly felicity. In fact, the more hope there is, the more fear of this kind there will be.

How closely and how beautifully are these two affections united by the Psalmist, "The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in them that hope in his mercy." Holy fear and confident hope therefore

not only may coexist, but must concur. This striking passage, in which these two affections are so balanced, we should all have as a frontlet before our eyes, and engraven, as upon the palms of our hands. Satan, so skilful in the art of temptation, and so successful in the business of destruction, has machinations adapted to all constitutions and cases; and while he tempts the fearful to despair, endeavours to seduce the confident to presumption, careless security, unwatchfulness, and sin; and never so glories in his triumphs, as when he can make their very expectation of heaven the occasion of their fall, by inflating them with spiritual pride. Holy fear will be to our joy, what the cooling influence of water is to machinery, that which prevents it from firing all about it, by the rapidity of its motion and the intensity of its friction.

We see, then, what is the Christian's true temper of mind. There should be a prevailing, sustaining, assured hope of eternal life, such as is not attended with very serious and perplexing, much less tormenting, doubt of its final possession, and such as will enable the believer to go on his way rejoicing; yet this, attended with so much fear of falling short, as while it does not materially interfere with his strong consolation, will keep him watchful, diligent, and prayerful. This hope and this fear, like the two angels that led Lot from Sodom to Zoar, will conduct the Christian from the city of destruction to the celestial city.

"IF IN THIS LIFE ONLY WE HAVE HOPE IN CHRIST, WE ARE OF ALL MEN MOST MISERABLE."

1 Cor. xv. 19.

This passage has been, to some good people, a source of perplexity, as seeming to suggest the idea that all

the happiness which Christianity brings to the children of men, belongs to another world: and that if this fail us, the life of the infidel and the worldling is to be preferred to that of the believer. This is contrary to the views and feelings of all true Christians, for they are ever ready to acknowledge that, even should Christianity be a fable and there be no heaven to come, they have found more true peace of mind and felicity in a life of piety, than they once did, or ever could, find in a life of sin. This is very true, and the passage does not intend to assert that there is no real happiness in the present practice of piety. The apostle teaches in another place, that "Godliness is profitable for all things, having the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come;" and millions have found it so: he therefore does not mean, in this passage, to contradict the testimony of Solomon, "That wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." There is a pure and solid happiness in piety, compared with which the pleasures of sin are as muddy streams to the water of the clear flowing spring. So that if there were no future state, there is more pleasure in the way of holiness, than of transgression.

Some have supposed the apostle alludes exclusively to himself and his fellow-labourers in the cause of Christ, whose life was one constant and dreadful martyrdom; and truly, apart from the hope of immortality, and the final possession of eternal glory, they would have been the most miserable of men, especially if to their sufferings there had been added the self-reproach and agonies of conscience which they must have endured, under the consciousness, if Christ had not risen, of being false witnesses for God, in testifying his

resurrection. They must, in that case, have been not only the greatest of sufferers, but the basest of criminals. But though in a special manner it was applicable to them, and to all others who have drunk to its dregs the bitter cup of persecution, this passage does not apply exclusively to them. That there was a special and primary reference to them is, I think, evident from what Paul said in his former epistle, chap. iv, 9-14. And from his mention of his own case, in the 31st and 32nd verses of this chapter.

But still there is also a general principle contained in this passage, and that is, that the chief happiness of the Christian is to be waited for, in faith and hope, and is to come in another world. It is of great importance to bear this constantly in remembrance, as it will check that too great eagerness after amusement, and that impatience under self-denial, which are manifested by many professing Christians. We are not so much to seek for perfect happiness here, as to prepare for it hereafter. There can be no doubt that the christian life, whatever felicity it yields, and much it does yield, is, notwithstanding, a constant state of self-denial. We are to "mortify our members which are upon earth," and to "crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts thereof." There are many sources of enjoyment forbidden to the children of light, to which the children of this world repair without scruple or reluctance. Christians see the joyous countenances of the lovers of pleasure, and hear their merry voices, and feel sometimes a sense of sacrifice in retiring from the forbidden fruit. They are often called to take up a cross, where others grasp a garland of delight. That man knows not his own heart, or has forgotten its

history and its occasional yearnings, who asserts that he has never felt any desire for any works of the flesh even the most pure. What is it that enables the believer to carry on this life of sacrifice, to separate himself from gaieties and delights which others enjoy: to retire from his friends and companions, and sometimes amidst their anger, ridicule, and persecution, to be laughed at as a puritan, precisian, or hypocrite? The hope of eternal life. He deems the practice of many things which those around him approve, to be inconsistent with his expectation of eternal glory. Take from him this hope therefore, and he is in some respects a pitiable man. In proportion to the elevation of our hopes are we to be commiserated for their final disappointment. And no one has such hopes as the Christian, so high, so vast, so sublime. Is it not a deplorable condition, to embrace a cross, to become ridiculously singular, obnoxious to many, and often disquieted in ourselves, by the chase of a bubble and in contemplation of a vision?

It does not follow however, I again say, that Christians would be in fact more unhappy than other men, if there should be no future reward; for even then their expectations of it, and the consolation they have derived thence, would counterbalance their peculiar trials, self-denials and hardships. No, no, the apostle did not intend to teach that apart from a future world, a man would be more happy in vice than in virtue. In the love of God, in purity of life, in the means of grace, in the fellowship of the saints, he has more real happiness than the sinner has in his evil courses. The apostle does not refer so much to their personal feelings, as to their condition and their hopes. At the same

time I would most emphatically remark, that the Scriptures do not represent as the only or chief motive to good conduct, that virtue is its own reward. It is so, I know, as all must have experienced who have practised it. But this is quite too refined, too much opposed in some cases to the temporal interests of mankind, and therefore too feeble a motive for promoting its practice with the generality of men. Mr Hall has most correctly, as well as most eloquently argued that "the system of infidelity is not only incapable of arming virtue for great and trying occasions, but leaves it unsupported in the most ordinary occurrences. In vain will its advocates expatiate on the tranquillity and pleasure attendant on a virtuous course; for though you may remind the offender that in disregarding them he has violated his nature, and that a conduct consistent with them is productive of much internal satisfaction; yet if he reply that his taste is of a different sort, that there are other gratifications which he values more, and that every man must choose his own pleasures, the argument is at an end. Rewards and punishments assigned by infinite power, afford a palpable and pressing motive, which can never be neglected without renouncing the character of a rational creature; but tastes and relishes are not to be prescribed." "As the present world is to infidelity the only place of recompense, whenever the practice of virtue fails to promise the greatest sum of present good; cases which often occur in reality, and much oftener in appearance; a deviation from rectitude becomes the part of wisdom; and should the path of virtue, in addition to this, be obstructed by disgrace, torment, or death, to persevere would be madness and

folly, and a violation of the great and most essential law of nature. Virtue being on these principles in numberless instances at war with self-preservation, never can, or ought to become, a fixed habit of the mind."

The Hope of the Hypocrite.

With what frequency and impressive solemnity is this subject referred to in Scripture, especially in the book of Job. The complicated sorrows of the suffering patriarch were bitterly aggravated by the suspicions, accusations, and reproaches of his sadly mistaken friends. Adopting the false principle that character was to be ascertained by external circumstances, they interpreted his afflicted condition as a punishment for his sins, and a revelation of his hypocrisy. Hence the application to him of such language as the following: "The hypocrite's hope shall perish." "A hypocrite shall not come before him." "The congregation of hypocrites shall be desolate." "The joy of the hypocrite is but for a moment." "What is the hope of a hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul." These passages contain a terrible truth; but they did not apply to Job. A hypocrite is the most odious of all characters on earth, and a character that has always been found upon earth. There are hypocrites in all departments of human action, in politics, in friendship, in business, in morals, and alas in religion also. "Wherever there is genuine coin, it will be likely to be counterfeited; and the fact of a counterfeit is always a tribute to the intrinsic worth of the coin, for who would be at the pains to counterfeit what is worthless?"

It is the greatest madness, as well as wickedness, in the world, to be a hypocrite in religious profession. The worldling hates him for being a Christian even in appearance; God hates him doubly, because he is a Christian only in appearance. He has thus the detestation of both, and no comfort in himself. "Yet, if thou wilt not be good, as thou seemest," says Bishop Hall, 'I hold it better to seem ill, as thou art. An openly wicked man doth much hurt with notorious sins; but a hypocrite doth at last more shame goodness by seeming good. I would rather be an open wicked man than a hypocrite; but I would rather be no man, than either of them." The same good prelate, in a sermon which he preached before King James the First's court, a sermon which has more of awful denunciation against sin, and threatenings against sinners, and descriptions of eternal torment, than the plainest Methodist preacher would now like to deliver, has the following quaint remarks, "He that hath only the form of godliness is a hypocrite: he that hath not even a form is an atheist. I know not whether I should sever these two: both are human devils well met: a hypocrite is a masked devil; an atheist is a devil unmasked. Whether of them, without repentance, shall be deeper in the hell they shall both hereafter feel, I determine not."*

Hypocrisy, in its generic sense, means pretending to religion, while there is none, keeping up the semblance

* This is but a specimen, and a slight one too, of the language which even in those corrupt days was addressed by Episcopal lips to courtly ears. In reading the sermons which in those days were delivered both by the serious Episcopal preachers, as well as by Nonconformists, I am astonished at their plainness, their earnestness, and their fearlessness. Who can read the discourses addressed by

without the reality of it. But there are two classes of hypocrites, or, at any rate, two degrees of hypocrisy. First, those who, though they profess to be religious, know they are not so, and who have assumed the profession for some worldly advantage they expect to gain by it, either in the way of profit or applause. They are intentional deceivers, and are conscious of the deception they are practising. These are, in the fullest sense of the word, hypocrites. It is to these our Lord alludes, with so much indignation, in his ministry. This is the most disgusting and loathsome species of hypocrisy. The other sort are men who have but the semblance of religion, yet ignorantly mistake it for the substance. "Now both these agree in this, that they are deceivers, for deceit is the formal constituent element of hypocrisy; but their difference lies in this, that the one designedly deceives the world, the other unintentionally deceives himself; the one resolvedly goes towards hell, the other sets out for heaven, but carelessly mistakes the way: one is a mere shadow, the other is a rotten substance." The first is a much rarer character than the other. It is only now and then we meet with hypocrisy in its intentional and grosser form; but on every hand crowds are to be found who are self-deceived. Our cities, towns, and villages, are, to a considerable extent, peopled with them; and they abound even in our churches. Self-deception was not

Donne, Hall, Brownrigg and Ezekiel Hopkins to Courts, and by Owen and Baxter to the House of Commons, without feeling how much the modern pulpit is inferior in intense earnestness to the preachers of those times? It may be they erred on the side of coarse descriptions of the consequences of sin and the punishment of sinners; but we err as much on the side of a false refinement, and are almost afraid to "mention hell to ears polite."

unknown in our Lord's time, and under his ministry. Even when a cross stood in the way of a christian profession, and in order to become a professor a man must take it up and bear it onward under these circumstances self-deception was frequent. "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name; and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity." This is really one of the most alarming passages of Holy Writ, as shewing how far persons may go in self-deception, and how perseveringly they may continue in it, even to death, and through it, up to the very judgment seat of Christ. When persecution raged, and it might have been supposed no one could impose upon himself by a mere form of godliness without the power, and nothing short of real conversion by divine grace could lead any one to take up the christian name, even then, this modified hypocrisy prevailed, and unsound profession was common. How much more common might it be supposed to be now, when we sit under our vine and fig tree, none daring to makes us afraid: when it rather adds to, than detracts from, our respectability; when it calls for so little self-denial and self-sacrifice. I am truly alarmed and terrified at the thought of the present state of things: multitudes are going down to the pit with a lie in their right hand, floating to perdition on the stream of delusion.

Hypocrites may have, and really have, their hopes, even the grosser class of them. They misunderstand

the holy and righteous character of God, and endeavour to persuade themselves he is too merciful to destroy any of his creatures. They misapprehend the nature of sin in general, and have light views of their own sin. They find out all extenuating circumstances of their sins, and persuade themselves that there is a kind of necessity for their seeming to be religious, combined with an impossibility of their being actually so. Then in order to defend themselves from the accusations of their conscience, they will be often bribing and endeavouring to pacify it with some specious outward performances. When this will not do, they will contrive to shelter themselves under the pretext that there is hypocrisy in those who are considered real Christians, since none of them quite live up to their profession. If this is insufficient, they will found their hopes upon the principles of infidelity, and believe that all religion is a sham, and that they shall do as well in the next world, after serving themselves by a pretended religion in this, as those who are sincere. Especially will they lay hold of the failings of strict professors, and bolster up their expectations by saying, if those do much in the way of sin, they may do much more, and get to heaven at last. Hypocrites will often keep up their hope by comparing themselves with others who are openly vicious, and apparently worse than they are; and think themselves religious, not from any goodness of their own, but from the badness of others. "They raise a structure of reputed holiness, and therefore of hope, upon the deplorable ruins of other men's character. This was the chief ground of the Pharisee's hope, he was not as other men, an adulterer, covetous, swearer, or the like. There are many paths to perdition in the

broad way, some of which are more cleanly and some more foul, yet they all lead to the same end; and those shall as certainly arrive at hell that tread the cleanlier paths of a refined hypocrisy, as those that track through the mire and dirt of the grossest abominations."

But how shall I account for the false hope of the other class of hypocrites, the unintentional ones? In much the same way as in the preceding case, with some additional causes. Ignorance of the nature of true religion; setting up false standards of personal godliness, such as church relationship, and an orthodox creed; depending upon the opinions of others concerning their state, rather than the testimony of their own conscience; mistaking mere emotional excitement for real conversion; relying upon a public profession as an evidence of the possession of divine grace in the soul; comparing themselves with the great bulk of professors, and concluding that they are as good, and shall do as well, as they; and especially neglecting to make anxious, serious, and deep examination of their own state. Self-deception begins in ignorance, and is continued by the want of self-trial. A man must dive into his own heart, if he would know his state; he must take the candle of the Lord, which is the Word of God, and go down into the depths of his own soul, and search every corner, just as he would his cellar, in which he feared was concealed a thief, or a murderer. No wonder so many are deceiving themselves, when they are so fearfully neglectful of this duty of "proving their own selves." It were almost to be desired that in addition to the silent admonition of Scripture, and the earnest exhortations from the pulpit, the sound would break in thunder from the skies, "Examine yourselves,

whether ye be in the faith," and that the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God, which are to usher in the day of judgment, would awaken the slumbering multitude with the words; "Be not deceived, God is not mocked." Ordinary methods lamentably fail. Under the most searching ministry, the most alarming sermons, pointing out the infallible tests of the christian character, fatal delusion sends multitudes to perdition.

But this hope of the hypocrite shall perish. It sometimes dies out in life, and the deceived man sinks down into a comfortless creature, without a beam of joy, or a feeling of peace. It was never more than a dim spark, and in some great or unexpected affliction expires, and leaves him in rayless night. He finds out his delusion suddenly, and sees that his were but the groundless expectations of an unconverted man. The world fails him, and his hope has vanished under the ruins of his fortune. He realises now the force of Bildad's cutting interrogation: "Can the rush grow up without mire? Can the flag grow without water? Whilst it is yet in its greenness, and not cut down, it withereth before any other herb. So are the paths of all that forget God; and the hypocrite's hope shall perish: whose hope shall be cut off, and whose trust shall be as the spider's web. He shall lean upon his house, but it shall not stand: he shall hold it fast, but it shall not endure." Or under some heart-searching sermon, or awakening book, his false hopes fall from around him, and the dreadful secret is revealed to him. But his heart is unchanged. Many carry on the delusion to the bed of death. The last enemy often comes to shatter with dreadful power the vain confidences

of hypocritical professors. Then the saying of the Psalmist is verified in them: "His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth, and in that very day, all his thoughts perish." All his fond expectations will then upbraid him to his face; Satan, his greatest flatterer, will laugh him to scorn; death will confute all his confidences, and the dawning lights of eternity convince him that his hopes of heaven were groundless and irrational. Many however are not awakened from the dream of a false profession, even by the harsh voice of the king of terrors, they pass through the dark valley with the delusive light of a lamp of their own kindling; but the next moment it is quenched in the darkness of eternal night. The hope of the hypocrite then perishes in the day when God takes away his soul. Few things are more tormenting to a man than feelings of disappointment, and it is the climax of all misery, the most venomous of all the poisons of the spirit, when to them are added the torments of self-reproach. How terrible will be the disappointment and remorse of the hypocrite, when death, which closes his eyes to all the scenes of earth, shall open them to those of the bottomless pit. Oh, think of a man who has been long away from his pleasant home, his wife and children, enduring all kinds of hardships, bad weather, rough roads, inconvenient inns, great fear of dangers, and much unkind treatment; but has solaced himself all the while with sweet thoughts of his arrival at his own house and the bosom of his family; being, as soon as he reaches the threshold of his dwelling, seized, put in irons, and immured for life in a dark dungeon. What horror, surprise, and overwhelming disappointment would seize and hold him!

But what are these, to the horror and surprise of a man who expecting to arise from the bed of death, to the felicities of heaven, sinks from it, to the miseries of hell! In the case of the traveller just mentioned, if he be a Christian, he carries to his dungeon the hope of immortality, and knows that however bitter his disappointment, and however long his confinement, he shall rise at last from that dismal state, to a glorious eternity, made more glorious at length, by contrast with his previous one. But the hope of the hypocrite makes his eternity more miserable, by its contrast with the expectations he had till then indulged. How terrible is the language of Dr. South: "Former happiness is the greatest ingredient of present misery. It would be some relief to a condemned sinner, if with the loss of his hope, he could lose his memory too; but alas, when he shall lie down in sorrow and torment, this will recall to his mind all that peace, comfort, and tranquillity, that his false hopes formerly fed him with. No voice will be heard in hell so loud and frequent as this sad and doleful one. 'My hopes deceived me, my confidence deluded me.' Nothing so comfortable as hope crowned with fruition; nothing so tormenting as hopes snapped off with disappointment and frustration; and were it lawful to wish an enemy completely miserable, I would wish that he might strongly hope, and never obtain. Now from what has been determined, I think we may truly conclude, that of the two, the despairing reprobate is happier than the hoping reprobate. They both indeed, fall equally low; but then he that hopes hath the greater fall, because he falls from the highest place; he that despairs goes to hell, but then he goes thither with expectation; though he is

condemned, he is not surprised; he has inured his heart to the flames, and has made those terrors familiar to him, by the continual horrors of his meditation; so that when he dies, he passes but from one hell to another, and his actual condemnation is not the beginning, but the carrying on of his former torment. In short, to express the wretchedness of the hypocrite's hope, I shall only add this; certainly that must needs be exceeding dismal, in comparison of which despair is desirable." These are awful words, and should send an alarm to every heart, and exert an awakening power over every conscience. Under any circumstances, that will be a solemn moment, when God takes away our soul, even though he take it to heaven. "In vain our fancy strives to paint, the moment after death." What a conviction will that be, when the disembodied spirit says, "I am in eternity." Oh, the surprise, the felicity, the rapture, of being able to add, "I am safe, I am in heaven!" It would seem as if the soul would sink under the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory which will then come upon it, surround it, absorb it. But oh, the dreadful reverse! The indescribable, overwhelming astonishment, consternation, and horror of the hypocrite, who wakes up amidst the scenes of the bottomless pit: it is not for language to set forth nor imagination to conceive, the torment that will in a moment come over the miserable soul, whose first words in eternity will be, "I am lost, lost, lost, for ever: I am in hell." It is not only happiness that will then expire, but hope. The wretched spirit will look through the vista of millions of ages, and see no one single object to relieve its ever present sense of unutterable woe. It will

then fully realize the terrible import of the words of Milton:

> "Regions of sorrow, doleful shades, where peace
> And rest can never dwell; hope never comes,
> That comes to all: but torture without end."

May these words have their due effect upon us all. May they lead us to ask in deep solemnity, "Is mine the hope of the hypocrite? A hope that will thus 'make me ashamed,' or is it 'a good hope through grace.' Am I one of the many victims of self-deception, or am I an Israelite indeed?" Is my profession a lie or a truth? Oh, consider, it is eternity that is at stake upon this question. It is heaven or hell that depends upon it. What a motive to examination; close, anxious, honest examination; how earnest, prayerful, solicitous, we should be; not to persuade ourselves that we are true Christians, but to see if we are such! Let us all under the influence of these thoughts, carry to God the prayer of the Psalmist, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me: and lead me in the way everlasting."

Hope in Death.

"The wicked is driven away in his wickedness, but the righteous hath hope in his death." Prov. xiv, 32.

Death is an awful event. It is that monster, from the sight and touch of which, all sentient beings recoil with instinctive alarm and dread. Had it occurred but in one single instance, it would fill with surprise and horror all who beheld it. We can form no conception of the feelings of our first parents, when they saw the

dead body of their murdered Abel, and for the first time understood the meaning of that word, death. By one of the boldest and most impressive personifications of Scripture imagery, death is called "The King of Terrors." And who that has witnessed it or duly considered it, will say the metaphor is too strong? O most dreadful point, which art the end of time, and beginning of eternity! O most fearful instant, which shuttest up the prefixed term of life, and determinest the business of our salvation: what things, and how many, and how vast, are to take place in thee! In the same instant, life is to finish, all our works are to be examined, and that state fixed which is to last through all eternity. Merciful God, prepare us by thy grace for that event, so pregnant with eternal consequences.

"It is appointed unto man once to die." What is only to be once done, should be well done. If it be done ill, it cannot be mended by dying well at another time. God gives some of our senses and our limbs in pairs, that if one be lost or injured, we might not be totally disabled; but of deaths he gives us but one; if we miscarry in that, all is lost, and we are ruined for eternity. Is it not a solemn and a fearful case, that for the thing of greatest import to us, Death, there is neither experience nor remedy? We have but one life on earth, without previous existence to prepare us for it. We stereotype our history as we write it action by action; but a bad life may through God's rich grace be mended, so far at least as to prevent its disastrous consequences, by a holy death; but for a bad, that is an impenitent and unbelieving, death, there can be no remedy. The seal of eternity is set upon it. As the tree leans, so it falls; as it falls, so it lies; as it

lies, so it rots. As our life leaves us, so death finds us; as death leaves us, so judgment finds us; and as judgment leaves us, so eternity will find us. Since then, eternity depends upon death, death upon life, and life upon a brittle thread which at any moment may be snapped by accident, or cut through by sudden disease; let us all take up, with far more intelligence, seriousness, and earnestness, than he did who first uttered it, the prayer of the hireling prophet, and say, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my latter end be like his."

I now turn to the very striking contrast presented in the passage which stands at the head of this section. Both the wicked and the righteous die. Even for the latter, there is no road to immortality round the sepulchre, but only through it. No translation by chariots of fire is granted to them. They must be conformed to their Lord, not only in his life, but in his death. They must die, in order that his power may be displayed in sustaining them in the prospect of dissolution, and in their glorious resurrection. His victory over Satan, who had the power of death, will thus be rendered more illustrious by the triumphant resurrection of the saints. But how different the deaths of the saint and the sinner. The wicked is driven away in his wickedness. He would live, but he cannot: he would not die, but he must. He goes not away, but is driven away. He is not led out, but is forced out. His hands grasp the earth, he clings to it, and is forced by a wrench to loose his tenacious hold. He is dragged out of life, as a criminal from his home to the place of execution. Cases have occurred in which hell seemed to have begun this side of eternity. The sinner has some-

times been tortured on the rack of his own horrified imagination, before he was slain by the sword of Divine justice. Blair, in his poem entitled "The Grave," has strikingly pourtrayed this:

> "How shocking must thy summons be, O Death!
> To him that is at ease in his possessions;
> Who, counting on long years of pleasure here,
> Is quite unfurnished for that world to come.
> In that dread moment, how the frantic soul
> Raves round the walls of her clay tenement,
> Runs to each avenue and shrieks for help,
> But shrieks in vain! 'How wishfully she looks
> On all she's leaving, now no longer hers.'
> A little longer, yet a little longer,
> Oh, might she stay, to wash away her stains,
> And fit her for her passage. Mournful sight!
> Her very eyes weep blood; and every groan
> She heaves is big with horror: but the foe,
> Like a staunch murderer, steady to his purpose,
> Pursues her close through every lane of life,
> Nor misses once the track, but presses on;
> Till, forced at last to the tremendous verge,
> At once she sinks to everlasting ruin.
> Sure 'tis a serious thing to die."

Still I must admit that this is not always the case. Wicked men sometimes die with apathy, petrified into stones by a stoical or atheistical philosophy; "there are no bands in their death, and their strength is firm." While others go still further, and through the power of ignorance and self-deception, have a false peace. They may, and do sometimes, die like lambs; but only to wake with the rage, fury, and misery of scotched snakes or wounded lions. Their case has been set forth in the section that speaks of the hope of the hypocrite.

But I now turn with delight to the bright and beau-

tiful contrast: "The righteous hath hope in his death." This, I think, is one of the few passages of the Old Testament which refer to a future state. I am aware that those, among whom was Bishop Warburton, who contend that a future world was unknown to the Jews, or at least is not alluded to in the Jewish Scriptures, explain this expression as signifying nothing more than that, while the wicked are cut off, driven away in their wickedness, by calamities and other visitations of Providence, the righteous shall be delivered from the most imminent danger. But "that sagacious mind could never have confounded two things so essentially distinct, as hope in death and a hope of escape from death; had it not been necessary to subserve a favourite hypothesis." Equally satisfactory and beautiful is the note of a learned German critic (Dathe). "A splendid testimony of the knowledge of the Old Testament believers of a future life. The wicked, in his calamity, is agitated with the greatest terror. He knows not where to turn. But the godly in this last evil has no fear, he knows to whom to flee, and where he is going." Again. "He dieth in God's grace, and in an assured confidence of the salvation of his soul, and of the glorious resurrection of the body."*

That same hope which sustained the Christian under the afflictions, and purified him amidst the temptations and corruptions of life, follows him to the sorrows of death, and the pains of the grave. The same grand and glorious object which had excited his desires, and raised his expectations in life, appears still more glorious as death is now near at hand. He rests upon the same foundation, and Christ is still his hope. He may be

* Bridges.

able thankfully, and even triumphantly to say, with the apostle, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge shall bestow upon me in that day:" but he does not abandon the Saviour's righteousness to trust his own. The labours, the sacrifices, the holy doings of a whole life spent in the service of God, add nothing to the entireness and strength of his dependence upon Christ. Never, no never, do the sins of his life appear more sinful, nor his righteousness more defective and worthless, to the believer, than when he is dying. Never does he appear less meritorious, less worthy, than when he views his character, his conduct, himself, in the light of opening eternity. It is then, that with a deeper humiliation than ever, he cries, "God be merciful to me, a sinner." Then, that he strips off with a holy indignation the last rag and tatter of self-righteousness, and wraps himself more closely in the robe of Christ's righteousness. And he does hope. Yes. Even the near prospect of his naked soul standing in the immediate presence of the holy God, and a clear view of all his past sins, do not deprive him of his hope. "I can die," he says; "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded he is able to keep that which I have committed to him, until that day."

Then, when all other hopes are extinguished, this remains. The worldling's expectations all die, not only with him, but before him. He sees one after another failing him. As regards his health, he struggles long against the evidence of increasing decay and approaching death, till at length the last possibility of recovery vanishes, and he sullenly says "Well, I feel I must die."

In that conviction is included the failure of all his other expectations, his flattering prospects in life, his incipient prosperity, his cherished connexions, all fade before his eye like a beautiful vision vanishing into thin air, and he has nothing left. Even the Christian is subject to this; he too sees every earthly hope about to expire in death. Yes, but as these stars of the night pale before him, they are lost in the blaze of the rising sun. His earthly expectations dissolve in the bright illumination of heaven's eternal day which already dawns upon his soul. To the question, "What have I left, when wife, children, home, fortune, prospects, are taken from me?" he exultingly exclaims, "Heaven and immortality."

This makes him willing to go. He dies with his own consent. It is a glad surrender, not a forcible ejectment. It is a voluntary taking leave, not an unwilling separation. The christian mariner weighs anchor, sets his canvass, catches the breeze, turns the prow of his vessel towards the shore of eternity, and safely enters the haven of eternal rest. He is not driven on, half wrecked, by the force of the tempest, against his will. He can take death by his cold hand without a shudder, and bid him welcome. "I can smile at death," said a dying saint, "because my Saviour smiles on me." He finds it an awful thing to die, to go from world to world, to plunge into eternity, to meet God face to face; but he can do it with composure, and, in many cases, with triumph. He descends to the dark valley with the triumphant challenge, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy, for though I fall, I shall arise; and however unworthy, I shall live and reign through our Lord Jesus Christ."

It is not an uncommon case for those whose hope was feeble all through their lives, to have it increased and strengthened in their dying moments. The hands that have hung down, have then been lifted up; the knees that were ever feeble, have then been strengthened; the harp, so often unstrung and hung upon the willows, has then been taken down, tuned afresh, and struck to the swan-like song of the dying saint, whose lips, till then, had uttered only strains of doubt and fear. It is marvellous to see in how many cases the timid and desponding have become bold, confident, and rejoicing in the face of the last enemy, and under his uplifted arm, as it brandished the fatal dart, which for aught they knew would the next hour pierce them through. What an encouragement to the living, to anticipate that they will be enabled to hope in death! Go forward, thou fearful believer, there is nothing so terrible to a Christian in death, as your perturbed imagination leads you to suppose; like every other evil, it diminishes in appearance as you approach it. The Sun of Righteousness often shines vertically over the valley of death. The "excellent glory" sends out its beams into that gloomy pass, to allure the traveller onward. The lights are seen in the windows of his Father's house, and Christ will send out the ministering angels to convoy you to his presence; and, more than this, will come himself to meet you. He has told you so. Believe him. Expect him. He says, "Fear not, I am with thee." Respond to the gracious promise, and say, "I will fear no evil, though I walk through the valley, not only of the shadow of death, but the valley of death itself, if thou art with me."

But is there no need of admonition, expostulation,

and rebuke, to many professing Christians on this subject? Is there not a sinful love of life to be overcome, and an equally sinful dread of death? Is there not a practical denial of their hope of immortality in the dread with which many, yea, most, look on to the hour of their dissolution? Do not infidels and worldlings, with cutting irony, sometimes tell us that we do not believe in heaven, or we should be more willing to go to it; that we belie our professions of faith and hope, or we should have less love of life and fear of death. "If we believed," they say, "as you do, we should be impatient to be gone." We deserve the rebuke, and let us profit by it. How forcibly does John Howe expostulate with us, in reference to this unwillingness to die, in the last chapter of his transcendently glorious work, entitled "The Blessedness of the Righteous," a work which as a whole is one of the sublimest treatises in the English or any other language. And how earnestly does Baxter follow up the same subject in the words with which I will close this section.

"What was it that rejoiced thee all thy life, in thy prayers, and sufferings, and labours? Was it not the hope of heaven? And was heaven the spring and motive of thy obedience, and the comfort of thy life? And yet wilt thou pass into it with heaviness? And shall thy approaches to it be thy sorrows? Didst thou pray for that which thou wouldest not have? Hast thou laboured for it, and denied thyself the pleasures of the world for it, and now art thou afraid to enter in? Fear not, poor soul! Thy Lord is there; thy husband, and thy head, and life is there, thou hast more there, a thousand-fold more, than thou hast here. Here thou

must leave poor mourning friends, that languish in their own infirmities, and troubled thee as well as comforted thee while thou wast with them, and that are hastening after thee, and will shortly overtake thee. But there thou shalt find the souls of all the blessed saints that have lived since the creation till this age, that are all unclothed of the rags of their mortality, and have laid by their frailties with their flesh, and are made up of holiness, and prepared for joy, and will be suitable companions for thee in thy joys. Why shouldest thou be afraid to go the way that all the saints have gone before thee? Where there is one on earth, how many are there in heaven? And one of them is worth many of us. Art thou better than Noah, and Abraham, and David; than Peter, and Paul, and all the saints? Or dost thou not love their names, and wouldest thou not be with them? Art thou loth to leave thy friends on earth and hast thou not far better and more in heaven? Why then art thou not as loth to stay from them? Suppose that I, and such as I, were the friends that thou art loth to leave; what if we had died long before thee? If it be our company that thou lovest, thou shouldest then be willing to die, that thou mayest be with us. And if so, why then shouldest thou not be more willing to die, and be with Christ, and all his holy ones, that are so much more excellent than we? Wouldest thou have our company? Remove, then, willingly to that place where thou shalt have it to everlasting; and be not so loth to go from hence, where neither thou nor we can stay. Hadst thou rather travel with us, than dwell here with us? And rather here suffer with us, than reign in heaven with Christ and us? "Oh! what a brutish thing is flesh! What an un-

reasonable thing is unbelief! Shall we believe, and fly from the end of our belief? Shall we hope, and be loth to enjoy our hopes? Shall we desire and pray, and be afraid of attaining our desires, and lest our prayers should be heard? Shall we spend our lives in labour and travel, and be afraid of coming to our journey's end? Do you love life, or do you not? If not, why are you afraid of death? If you do, why then are you loth to pass into everlasting life? You know there is no hope of immortality on earth. Hence you must pass, whether you will or not, as all your fathers have done before you; it is therefore in heaven, or nowhere, that endless life is to be had. If you can live here for ever, do. Hope for it, if any have done so before you. Go to some man of a thousand years old, and ask him how he made shift to draw out his life so long. But if you know that man walketh here in a vain show, and that his life is a shadow, a dream, a post; and that all these things shall be dissolved, and the fashion of them passeth away; is it not more reasonable that we should set our hearts on the place where there is hope of our continuance, than where there is none, and where we must live for ever, than where we must be but for so short a time? "Alas! poor darkened, troubled soul! Is the presence of Christ less desirable in thy eyes than the presence of such sinful worms as we, whom thou art loth to part with? Is it more grievous to thee to be absent from us, than from thy Lord; from earth, than from heaven; from sinners, than from blessed saints; from trouble and frailty, than from glory? Hast thou any thing here that thou shalt want in heaven? Alas, that we should thus draw back from happiness, and follow Christ so heavily

and sadly into life! But all this is owing to the enemies that now molest our peace. Indwelling sin, and a flattering world, and a brutish flesh, and interposing death, are our discouragements that drive us back. But all these enemies shall shortly be overcome. Fear not death, then, let it do its worst. It can give thee but one deadly gripe that shall kill itself, and prove thy life; as the wasp that leaves its sting behind, and can sting no more. It shall but snuff the candle of thy life, and make it shine brighter when it seems to be put out; it is but an undressing, and a gentle sleep. That which thou couldest not here attain by all our preaching, and all thy prayers, and cares, and pains, thou shalt speedily attain by the help of death. It is but the messenger of thy gracious Lord, and calleth thee to him, to the place that he hath prepared."

CHAPTER XI.

THE DUTY AND MEANS OF INCREASE IN HOPE.

WHATEVER in us is good, and yet imperfect, should be made better, for in nothing can we pretend to perfection; and whatever is good and weak should be strengthened. Who will say his hope is so lively as not to need quickening, so vigorous as not to need strengthening? It is lamentable to look abroad upon professors of religion, and see how low their expectations of heaven are, what small affection they have for it. But how much more lamentable is it to look within ourselves and see how low our own hopes are! Let any Christian glance back through a week, and as far as he can recollect, calculate how many times, with what length of time, and with what earnestness of feeling, he has thought of heaven and eternity. Let him call to recollection his troubles, and think how little consolation in them he has derived from the prospect of everlasting glory. Let him remember his general conduct, and ask how little resistance to evil tempers and strong temptation he has maintained in anticipation of the perfect purity of heaven. Let him think of his enjoyment, and enquire how much of it has really arisen from the idea he is going on to life eternal. He will be astonished to find how little this christian

grace has had to do with the formation of his character, the guidance of his conduct, and the supply of his felicity. He will be humbled to discover his amazing short-comings in this one branch of christian duty. No one knows how prevalent is his earthly-mindedness till he exercises this introspection and retrospection. When we consider what heaven is, it might be expected that a day could no more pass, with those who believe and expect it, without some lively anticipation of it, than a monarch could forget for the same time the near approach of his coronation. An eternal state of infinite enjoyment ever at hand, and believed to be at hand, and yet that sublime incomprehensible glory so hidden behind thick clouds of the petty cares of this world, as to be scarcely seen or thought of for days, perhaps weeks, together; at least with any seriousness and power! O Christian, do you not need to have your flagging desires quickened, your languid expectations stimulated? Do you not need to have your earthliness subdued, and to become in thought, feeling, and action, more like a candidate for, and expectant of, a crown of life and glory? For shame, for shame, to have heaven opening its glories above; yea, and eternity spreading out its ages before you; and yet to have so few thoughts and feelings in reference to that wondrous state! professing to believe it to be a reality, and yet to treat it as if it were some eastern tale, some mere vision of unreal felicity and honour.

You need to have your hope strengthened for yourselves. You are perhaps deeply and heavily afflicted, and want support and consolation. How you would be sustained and comforted, if your eye and your heart

were in heaven! The prospect of eternal glory, believed and expected, would lift you above your troubles into the sunshine of holy joy. All God's waves and billows might roll over you, but you would not be drowned; your vessel well anchored would ride out the storm, floating upon the waves, and rising upon the crest of the billows. Have you not often had to say, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me?"

And as you need stronger hope for your consolation, so you equally need it for your sanctification. Why has temptation such power over you? Why is your holiness so imperfect? Why are your corruptions so strong? Why do you make no more progress in the christian life? Why all this? I tell you again, because your hope is low. Increase it, and you will increase your holiness. You will grow in grace, if you will grow in heavenliness. I would din into the ear of a lukewarm professor, a lukewarm church, a lukewarm Christendom, "You are feeble in prayer, in righteousness, in watchfulness, in diligence, in every thing else, because you are neglecting your hope of heaven." Christian, would you have been vanquished in that conflict; would you have succumbed to that temptation; would you have yielded to that foe, had the eye of your soul been fixed at the time on the excellent glory? And it should be a matter of consideration with you, that as you need this grace now, so you know not how much greater need you may yet have of its supporting and sanctifying powers. It is not wise, I know, nor good, to anticipate afflictions, and by painful forebodings to go out and meet troubles half way. Our kind and merciful Lord has forbidden this: but it is prudent to

recollect that such things may happen to us, and it is well to be prepared for them. The mariner does not torment himself beforehand with the dread of storms, but he prepares for them. A weak hope is an ill preparation for heavy trials, and we ought not to have a strong one to seek when we want it to use. We should not have to provide the anchor when the storm rages. It is a blessed thing, when sore troubles or fierce temptations find us rejoicing with strong consolation in hope of the glory of God. Neither will do us much harm then. But how sad to be overtaken by dangerous tempests with a weak anchor!

And as there is need that your hope should be strengthened on your own account, so also is there for the sake of others. You have influence upon them, and they upon you. One lively spiritual Christian will probably enkindle a flame of sacred love in others. Warmth is diffusive, and so is cold, hence the lukewarm as well as the lively tend to make others like themselves. Few examples have more power than that of a believer going on his way rejoicing. His song, as he soars to heaven, like that of the lark, attracts attention and gives delight. And then how important is it to have your hope strengthened, and its joy increased, for the sake of the worldly-minded around you who are strangers to religion! If they see the professor of religion as earthly as themselves, as soon cast down in trouble, no more intent upon disciplining his soul for an immortal state than themselves; if they see no sparkle of joy in your eye, hear no note of praise upon your tongue, observe no stamp of heaven on your character and conduct; if eternal life appear to have no more reality in you than it has in them; if you are as little drawn towards its

glories as they are; if it have no more power to support and comfort you than it has to comfort them; what will their conclusion be, but that it is all mere profession? But on the other hand, what an effect would be produced, if all that profess religion were to be seen ever enjoying and feasting on the anticipated pleasures of immortality; so firm in the faith, so strong in the desire, and so confident in the expectations, of eternal glory, as to be preserved by it holy amidst surrounding corruption, cheerful under the pressure of affliction, resolute against the fiercest temptations, and thus to make it apparent that they have a mighty and blessed power and treasure which the worldly do not possess. Did professors live up to their duty and privileges; did they appear to consider heaven as a grand reality; were they seen with the rays of the hidden glory irradiating their countenances, and sparkling in their tears, what an effect would be produced! "O Christians, show the unbelieving world, by your rejoicing, how they are mistaken in their choice. Be ashamed that an empty sot, and one that must be for ever a firebrand in hell, should live a more joyful life than you. O, do not so wrong your Lord, your faith, your endless joys, as to walk in heaviness, and cast away the joy of the Lord, which is your strength! Doth it become a companion of angels, a member of Christ, a child of God, an heir of heaven, to be grieved at every petty cross, and to lay by all the sense of his felicity because some trifle of the world falls cross to his desires? Is it seemly for one that must be everlastingly as full of joy as the sun is of light, to live in such a self-troubling, drooping state, as to disgrace religion, and frighten away the ungodly from the doors of grace, that by your joyful lives might

be induced to enter? For the Lord's sake, Christians, and for your own sake, and in pity to the ungodly, yield not to the tempter that would trouble you when he cannot devour you. Is God your Father, and Christ your Saviour, and the Spirit your Sanctifier, and heaven your home? O, Christians, make conscience then of this command, 'Rejoice that your names are written in heaven.' Did you but know how God approveth such rejoicing, and how much it pleaseth him above your pining sorrow, and how it strengtheneth the soul, and sweeteneth duty, and easeth suffering, and honoureth religion, and encourageth others, and how suitable it is to gospel grace, and to your high relation and ends, and how much better it seems to subdue the very sins that trouble you, than your fruitless, self-weakening complainings do; I say, did you well consider all these things, it would sure revive your drooping spirits."*

Who then can doubt the necessity of having hope strengthened? Let me now go on to consider the means of strengthening it. Let the reader here pause for a moment, and lift up his heart to God in prayer for the ability to understand these means and the disposition to adopt them, and a blessing upon the perusal of what follows.

1. There must be a real, earnest, intelligent desire for this. We shall seek nothing without wishing to possess it, and our efforts will be in exact proportion to our desires. And do we not desire it, if indeed we are real Christians, and are already partakers of the earnest of our heavenly inheritance? Can anything be more desirable in itself? Think what it means, this hope, so great, so glorious, so well founded, so sublime in its

* Baxter.

object, so purifying, so consoling, so beatifying, in its influence. Christian, give loose to your desire, foster your most intense longings after it. Can you be satisfied with those faint wishes, those languid expectations you now possess? Must you not say, "Dear Lord, and shall I ever lie at this poor dying rate?" Do you not feel ashamed to think of the lukewarm and heartless manner in which you are treating such a subject as the heaven of the eternal God? Is heaven worth so little that you can be satisfied with a few mere probabilities and may-bes, that you may reach it? Were you to lose a pin from your dress, or a button from your coat, and one should come and tell you he had found it, you would care nothing whether the thing were true or not; but if your life or fortune were in peril, and one should come and inform you it was probable that was all safe, how you would long to have your belief that this blessed news was true, confirmed and made more strong! And will you not intensely desire to have your expectation of heaven strengthened?

2. Connect with this a determination that you will live after a different fashion. Recollect, this grace, like every other, is a duty as well as a privilege. "We desire that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end." Observe, the apostle speaks of a full assurance, and speaks of it in the way of command; and a command delivered not only to a few more eminent Christians, but to all. It is every one's duty, and he speaks of it as if it were within every one's reach. What is matter of duty should be matter of determination. You must rouse yourself, professor, to this great work, and resolve to do it. Resolve by an intelligent, deliberate, and firm purpose,

to be a more heavenly-minded man. Come under the bond of your own promise to God, to act as one may be expected to do, whose citizenship is in heaven.

3. There must be a more habitual, devout, and prayerful perusal and study of the Word of God. Let the reader mark each of the words I have here used. This reading of the Scripture must be habitual, not only occasional; the exercise of every day, and not merely of the Sabbath-day. It must be devout; with a mind solemn, serious, and reverential, recollecting that the Bible is God's silent, but impressive voice; and not lightly, carelessly, and perfunctorily. If it be devoutly done, it will also be prayerfully done. We should not only open the Bible ourselves, but ask God to open our eyes that we might behold wondrous things out of his law. And then the Scripture must be studied as well as perused. There must be an anxious desire to penetrate its meaning. We must use it as we would a direction given to us to regain our lost health or property, the writing of which was in some places a little illegible, and the meaning of which was a little obscure. How we should pore over such a document; how minutely we should examine it; how anxiously we should peruse it! We should not trust to other persons' eyes, however we might ask their assistance, but should read it for ourselves. Let us search the Scriptures in the same manner, for this is the way to have our desire and expectation strengthened. There is a passage on this subject which well deserves our attention: "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope." The apostle had just quoted from the sixty-ninth Psalm an expression

which referred to the coming Messiah. The Gentile churches were in danger of regarding these holy writings as relating, if not exclusively, yet chiefly, to the Jews, and referring to a state of things which had passed away. To correct this mistake he says that the Old Testament Scriptures were written for Christians as well as for Jews. These were the inspired writings which Timothy had known from a child as able to make men wise unto salvation, and which are now "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." This stamps a value and an importance upon the Old Testament, in opposition to modern tendencies to disparage the writings of Moses and the prophets.* But what I wish to show by the quotation is the importance of a devout study of the Word of God, in order to the maintenance of heavenly mindedness; for the apostle says that "we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope." To have hope must here mean not to obtain it in the first instance, for that is done by faith, and not by patience, but to hold it fast, as the word often signifies. So

* The direction which modern scepticism, in the views and writings of some professedly christian writers, even of those holding tutorships and professorships in our National Universities, is now taking, is to set aside the inspiration of much of the Old Testament; to resolve many of its historic facts into myths; and to represent the entire Jewish dispensation as nothing but a temporary, earthly, narrow, and in fact, gross and degrading accommodation of religion to the blindness and infirmity of a semi-barbarous nation, a system wholly disconnected with Christianity. So far does this spirit of daring and sceptical criticism go, that by natural inference from these premises, it must be concluded that the New Testament writers must have been either ignorant or dishonest in their habitual and avowed reverence for the Hebrew Scriptures as the Word of God. In opposition to all this, as an able writer in "The British Quarterly" has shown, in a temperate and logical confutation of Professor Baden

of the other expression, "comfort," the consolations of the gospel do not originate our desire and expectation of heaven, but they sweetly and wonderfully sustain them. The important lesson, then, taught by this passage, as well as by very many others, is that the vitality of the soul is maintained, and all the roots of piety strengthened, by the devout use of the Scriptures. It is, if I may change the metaphor, the medicine that cures a sickly state of the soul; the elixir that stimulates a flagging one; and the food that nourishes a feeble one. We know nothing about the future object of our supreme desire, but what we get from the Bible. To produce this expectation, to sustain it, to strengthen it, is one great design of the divine record. No wonder, then, that while the Bible is a neglected book, people's desires and expectations of heaven are so low and the prevalence of earthliness so great; that professors complain of their doubts and fears, their small consolation and their meagre joy; that heaven is little more than a name, and eternal glory only a thing to be heard of in sermons, but not realised in their experience. Nothing

Powell's work, entitled "Christianity without Judaism," "the religion of the Old Testament is essentially the same, as well as from the same Divine source, with that of the gospel, its forms alone being temporary, and its doctrines eternally true. The Christian Church is historically and vitally one with the Jewish Church (the outward form of voluntary local societies being substituted for that of a national and political body); Christianity is in fact Judaism developed and perfected, freed from its national trammels, and laying aside its gorgeous robes of symbolism, and addressing itself no longer to a portion of mankind, but to the whole race. And therefore we maintain that you cannot get rid of the Old Testament without cutting away the roots of the New, and charging the writers of it with an amount of error fatal to the moral value and decisive authority of their teaching." "British Quarterly," No. liv, 423.

can be a substitute for it; neither sabbaths, sermons, nor sacraments; neither hymns nor good books; it is the Bible, in addition to all these, that must sustain and invigorate the spiritual life. It is not only unadulterated milk for new-born babes, but strong meat for them that are of full age. A professor who is to any great extent a stranger to his Bible must be but a feeble, though he may be a sincere, Christian. The crumbs of Scripture which are contained in "Daily Portions," furnish but a scanty morsel of the bread of life, altogether undeserving their designation of portions. Why is the life of the church in this age so feeble? Why are spirituality of mind and heavenliness of affection so low? Why have we such a race of worldly-minded professors? Why? Because the private reading and study of the Scriptures are sadly neglected: men are strangers to their Bibles: the Bible was never more widely circulated, but at the same time, never less devoutly read by great numbers of professors. Where are now the men and the women to whom the Bible is a book of daily study and delight in the closet; to whom its words are "sweeter than honey or the honey-comb, and more desired than their necessary food?" The magazine, the review, the newspaper, and the last new novel or tale, have so far pushed out the Bible, that what they hear on the Sabbath day read from the pulpit, or the chapter at family prayer, if perchance family prayer be kept up, is all the converse multitudes of the members of our churches have with the Word of God. No wonder that they have to sing that doleful hymn:

"Long have I sat beneath the sound
Of thy salvation, Lord;
But still how weak my faith is found,
And knowledge of thy word.

How cold and feeble is my love,
How negligent my fear;
How low my hopes of heaven above,
How few affections there!"

4. If we would have our hope strengthened, we must have our faith strengthened, for the latter is to the former as cause to effect. We may desire a good thing even where we have no ground to believe it, but we cannot expect it if we do not believe it. I have made this clear in an early part of this treatise, but because of its importance and the prevailing ignorance in reference to it, I dwell upon it to reiteration. Let us, therefore, if we would raise higher the superstructure of our expectations, proportionably strengthen our faith, which is the basis on which they rest. If we present the prayer, "Lord, increase our hope," we must precede it by that other petition, "Lord, increase our faith." Let any one watch the operations of his own mind, and he will soon see how intimately these two graces are connected. Let him observe how, when a future good is before him, his desires are influenced and his expectations are raised just in proportion as he believes that it may be his. When at first his belief is very feeble, he has but a languid desire and a faint expectation; but as his conviction of the reality of the object deepens, and his persuasion that it is within his reach strengthens, his anticipations that he shall possess and enjoy it, brighten. We must seek then to have our faith in Christ made more intelligent and more firm. We should make ourselves acquainted with the historical and internal evidences of Christianity, particularly those of miracles, prophecy, the resurrection of Christ, the history of the Jews, the power and victories of the

gospel against opposition; but especially with the experimental evidence of it, or its divine might over our own souls in converting, sanctifying, and sustaining them. The expectation of eternal life is so grand, lofty, and immense; and the prospect of it is so sublime, that we should be thoroughly well grounded in all the proofs that it is not the baseless fabric of a vision. The faith of very many professors is little more than a traditional one. They can, if asked, give no reason for the hope that is in them. This is not as it should be; God has not left himself without a witness, in the word he has given us. He has given us his signature, in the word of his grace, and it is both a disrespect to him, as well as a disparagement to our own reason, to disregard the evidence that Christianity is a divine revelation. How satisfactory and delightful it is to see the New Jerusalem, the Paradise of God, the Heavenly City, with its foundations of precious stones, its streets of gold, its gates of pearl, standing out before us in all the light of the evidence which warrants our belief of it. It is the conviction of its truth and reality that quickens our desires, and enlarges our expectations. "No, no," says the intelligent believer, who is in the pursuit and expectation of glory, honour, immortality, and eternal life, "I am not following cunningly devised fables; I am not gazing at, and chasing, a brilliant meteor of imposture and delusion. I cannot be deceived. I have evidence not to be resisted, that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and the Saviour of the world, and that he has abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light by the gospel. I feel that in the belief of this gospel my feet are standing, not upon a quicksand or a

morass, but upon a rock." "Being justified by faith, I have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God; and, knowing in whom I have believed, I am persuaded he is able to keep that which I have committed to him until that day." From that faith, as a natural consequence, hope must spring up.

5. Connected with this is the too much neglected duty of meditation. "And this is a very great cause," says Jeremy Taylor, "of the dryness and expiration of men's devotion, because our souls are so little refreshed with the waters and dews of meditation. We draw our water from standing pools, which never are filled but with sudden showers, and therefore we are so often dry; whereas, if we would draw water from the fountains of our Saviour, and derive them through the channels of diligent and prudent meditation, our devotion would be a continual current, and safe against the barrenness of continual droughts." In this busy age men say they have no leisure for this sacred duty. They should rather say they have no inclination for it. The world is ever encroaching upon the time of devotion, stealing away first the morning season, then the evening, and it is to be feared in many cases, a part of the Sabbath. There was a time when the professing Christian would have thought his soul robbed of its treasure, if he could not be alone with God and his Bible in his closet, in 'the sweet hour of prime.' If no other time can be commanded for thoughtful reflection, how many hours of each Sabbath may be employed in it, which are now spent in idleness over the table or round the fire. Ought there not to be

times when every Christian should not only pray, but think, meditate, and contemplate; when he should look up, look in, look back, look forward? Can our souls be in a good condition, if we never, or rarely, practise this duty? Is it possible our hope can be strengthened without it? And in order to this invigoration, what should be the object of our contemplation? I answer, the heavenly state. Of course all divine subjects should be matters of devout thought, God, Christ, Salvation, Providence, indeed the whole range of divine truth in the Bible; but to inflame our desires after heaven, and to quicken our expectations of it, heaven itself should be the subject of meditation. Does the traveller, away from home, and going to it, need to be admonished to meditate upon his house, his wife, his family? Does the heir of a title and a large possession need to be exhorted to meditate upon his coming fortune? Yet the Christian, who is the heir of God and glory, can scarcely be induced to give an hour, at any time, to think of the heaven to which he is going. Oh, amazing insensibility, and humiliating earthly-mindedness! Professor, blush over your stupidity, and determine to give more time to the consideration of your glorious and eternal destiny. Now and then select, and devoutly read, all the passages of Scripture which speak of heaven, especially 1 Cor. xv; 2 Cor. v, 1-4; 1 Thes. iv; 1 Peter i, 1-7; 2 Peter iii; Rev. iv, v, vii, xxi, xxii. To the telescope which they furnish apply the eye of faith, and look up into heaven; bring its glories nearer, and endeavour to realize its stupendous felicities.

And as another means of increasing your desire after heaven, meditate also upon your own state, and

the real condition of the globe on which you dwell. Enkindle, raise, and strengthen your longing after heaven, by a deep sense of the various, numerous, and complicated ills of earth. Think of yourselves, your ignorance, corruption, and sorrow; your distrust, unbelief, and waywardness; your anxious cares, foreboding fears, and distressing perplexities; your privations, losses, and disappointments; your personal and relative afflictions; your wearisome labour and ceaseless toil; should not the experience of these things make you desire that better world, where all this will be removed for ever? Is not the way to derive improvement from your present circumstances, to make them the means of lifting you up, and helping you on to heaven? This is to gather grapes from thorns and figs from thistles.

In the same way let the condition of the world, without, around, and before you, invigorate your expectations, and increase your desires of heaven. I will admit that the face of nature is lovely, and that we live in a beautiful world. Yes, we are surrounded with fascinations, where "only man is vile." But behind and beneath the veil of material splendour, what a mass of moral corruption lies half manifested and half concealed. Earth is inhabited by a population, every one of whom, till subdued by divine grace, is an enemy and a rebel against God. Think of the loathsome crimes of idolatry, the delusions of Mohammedanism, the stubborn unbelief of Judaism, the corruptions of Popery, the blasphemies of infidelity, the bloody wars, alike of civilized and uncivilized nations, the cruel oppressions of slavery, the tyranny of despots, the conspiracies of traitors, and the filthy adulteries and horrid mur-

ders, the foul sins of the millions to whom the apostle's awful description in the first chapter of the Romans will apply. Then add to these crimes, the various and complicated forms of human wretchedness that are to be found on earth, the inconceivable horrors of famine, pestilence, and earthquake, the hundreds of loathsome and agonizing diseases and accidents to which the human frame is subject, the rigors of poverty, the hearts bruised, broken, crushed by ingratitude, conjugal infidelity, filial disobedience, disappointed hopes, defeated schemes. Nor is this all: our world is the domain of death, the slaughter-house of the saints, the territory of Satan, and at times, apparently the very suburbs of hell. Such is this world, a vale of tears, where "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." What a black and awful contrast to heaven! Surely, surely, there is infinitely more than enough, in the contemplation of such a picture, to wean us from earth, and lead us to set our hope upon heaven.

Nor must we stop here; for if we come from the world to the church, we shall find in that, abundant matter to cause us to lift up our longing eyes to the state, "where all the air is love, and all the region peace." "I am," said a good man, "almost as weary of the church as I am of the world." No wonder. Look at her broken unity, her blighted peace, her enfeebled strength, her tarnished beauty, her prostrate honours. See her various sects, and their bitter sectarianism. Hear her angry controversies, and her strife of tongues. Notice the ignorance or indolence, the inconsistencies and falls, of many of her ministers, and

the imperfections of all her members. How partially sanctified, how wrinkled and how blemished does she appear; alas, how unlike the beautiful vision of the New Jerusalem in the apocalypse, coming down out of heaven, having the glory of God, and adorned as a bride prepared for her husband! Is there not sufficient in all this, did we but consider it, to quicken our desires and strengthen our expectations of the church triumphant, when she shall be seen without blemish, wrinkle, spot, or any such thing?

6. Gurnall pithily and pointedly says, "Wouldst thou have thy hope strong, keep thy conscience clear. Thou canst not defile this, but thou wilt weaken that. Living godly in this present world, and looking for the blessed hope, are conjoined in Titus ii, 13. A soul wholly void of godliness must needs be destitute of all true hope; and the godly person that is loose and careless in his holy walking, will soon find his hope languishing. All sin is aguish meat; it disposeth the soul that tampers with it to trembling fears, and shakings of heart." This is as important and impressive as it is quaint and true. The man who can expect heaven, and sin at the same time, is in the last stage of delusion. Even the little imperfections of the real Christian, which are not incompatible with a state of grace, will, if not resisted, mortified, and removed, rise like a mist to dim the lustre of heaven's glorious sun; while presumptuous, deliberate transgressions will throw it into total eclipse. Keep conscience then, professor, as the noon-tide clear.

7. The way to have hope strengthened, is to keep it in constant exercise. Bodily strength is thus increased.

Indolence and inactivity, when indulged as a habit, and not used for repose after labour, and for recovering from fatigue, enervate the muscular frame, while well regulated exertion invigorates it. So it is with the soul, both as regards its natural faculties and moral powers. One act prompts another; and acts repeated settle into habits. The way to have stronger faith, is to exercise what we have; and so it is with regard to its sister grace. Christian, if it be desirable (and can you doubt it?) to have a strong desire, a more confident expectation of eternal glory, let not what you have lie dormant in your soul, like some old recipe for health in your drawer, which is never read and never used, but call it out into real continuous application. Never, if possible, let a day pass without at least one steady glance at the heavenly firmament. Let not earth have such a complete ascendancy over your soul, over all its thoughts, feelings, desires, and pursuits, as to engross one whole day to itself. Even in the hurry, eagerness, and heat of the battle of life, and the absorbing power of business, endeavour to lower the feverish pulse of worldliness by frequent thoughts of glory to come. Even when pressed with secular anxieties, and panting in the career of commercial competition, dart one idea into eternity; catch one glimpse of those treasures laid up in heaven. Go forth each day to your industry with a devout recollection that you are also to trade for another world, to lay up treasures in heaven, and to grow wealthy in the unsearchable riches of Christ. When tempted to dishonest or dishonourable gain, think of heaven. When disappointed, think of heaven. When called to suffer losses, think of heaven.

When injured and oppressed, think of heaven. And when returning from the strife of competition to your own habitation, weary and worn with labour, dispirited and discouraged by an unsuccessful day, to be followed by a restless and sleepless night, think of heaven. In all other troubles and perplexities adopt the same practice. Yes, and in your more prosperous seasons do the same. You should make this practice run like a golden thread through all your states of mind, in all the varying circumstances of life, uniting all in one holy habit of heavenly-mindedness, till by daily exercise to hope becomes as natural and as easy to you as to live.

8. But all this is not enough without believing, earnest, and persevering prayer. This is the way the apostle took to help the saints of his day to obtain this precious blessing; for a proof of which, I refer you again to Romans xv, 13, a passage I have already considered. He that would have a life of hope, must live a life of prayer. If hope is the ladder by which we ascend to heaven, prayer is the ladder by which we ascend to hope. In conversion God implants the seed of this grace; in sanctification he causes it to grow; in full assurance he brings it out in all its full-blown beauty and fragrance. It is all his work. But he will not do so if he is not asked to do it. We cannot have it without his grace, and he will give his grace only in answer to our prayers. In a way of sovereign mercy he often bestows the grace of conversion unasked, and is thus "found of them that sought him not;" but in subsequent donations the Lord seems very much to regulate his conduct by the rule of bestowing his richest favours

where he knows they are most coveted, and will be most prized. The principle whence divine communications flow, is free, unmerited benignity; but in the mode of bestowing its fruits, it is worthy of the Supreme Ruler to consult his majesty, by withholding a copious supply till he has excited in the heart a profound estimation of his gifts. Now surely the least consideration must convince you of the infinite desirableness of such a blessing as a living, vigorous, and assured expectation of heaven, and of the imperative necessity of intensely earnest prayer to obtain it. Oh! Christian, let there be in your soul ineffable longings after this great blessing; stretch every sail, and launch forth, by importunate prayer, into the deep sea of the divine perfections and promises, that you may be brought into this holy, happy, expecting frame. Give yourself to prayer; feel as if you must have the blessing, and that God alone can give it. Set your heart upon it. Be contented with nothing less than full assurance. Use a reverend freedom, an humble familiarity with God. Tell him that you cannot do without this confident expectation of things hoped for; that it is not only heaven hereafter that you want, but also the hope of it now. And let yours be the prayer of faith, as well as of fervency. This is one of the blessings that he has promised to give. It must accord with his will to bestow it. He will answer, if you have faith, not only the spirit, but the very letter, of your request. It honours him to bestow it; it honours him to be asked to bestow it; and it honours him for you to expect it. He loves to see his children rejoicing in hope, and he loves to hear them ask to be enabled to do so. By all the comfort this would bring to yourselves, by

all the credit it would gain for religion, by all the beneficial influence it would exert on others, I entreat you to seek after a livelier expectation of a glorious immortality, and to cultivate a spirit of fervent and believing prayer, in order to obtain it.

And now pious reader, in finishing this volume, I would say that if it shall contribute in any degree to the removal of your doubts and fears, and to the strengthening of your faith and hope, my end in writing it will be accomplished. However much it is below its great theme, (and even vastly mightier minds than mine must of necessity fall below such a subject,) it may, by God's blessing, be of some little service to the members of God's chosen and redeemed family. No one can be more sensible than I am of its defects, and had another pen undertaken the task, mine had not been taken up. Still, with all its defects, I can adopt the language of the pious Bishop Horne, in the preface to his Exposition of the Psalms, "Could the author flatter himself that any one would take half the pleasure in reading the following exposition, which he hath taken in writing it, he would not fear the loss of his labour. Happier hours than those which have been spent on these meditations on the songs of Sion, he never expects to see in this world. Very pleasantly did they pass, and moved swiftly and smoothly along; for when thus engaged, he counted no time. They are gone, but have left a relish and a fragance upon the mind, and the remembrance is sweet."

The end, at any rate, of my own life approaches, and so indeed does the end of the world, when hope with all mankind will cease, consummated with some in eternal

fruition, and terminating with others in everlasting despair. Oh what scenes of ineffable glory or of inconceivable horror are before us! How all that is glorious or terrible on earth dwindles into insignificance before the scenes which by the pen of inspiration are presented to our view! The advent of Christ, when he shall come a second time without sin unto salvation, is the grand object to which believers under the Christian dispensation should be looking forward, with a still livelier and more joyful expectation, than did the pious Israelites under Judaism, to his coming in the flesh. "O Christians, let us wake up from our slumbers, and rise from our prostration in the dust, and live as ever waiting for that hour. What matter though we be poor, slighted, slandered, forgotten, moving in the shadows of this world, so that we attain unto a glorious resurrection. O most glad hour, when it shall dawn towards the first day of the everlasting week; when there shall be a making ready in the heavens above and in the earth beneath; when legions of angels shall gather round the Sun of Righteousness, and all orders and hosts of heaven shall know that the time for 'the manifestation of the sons of God' is come! What joy shall there be at that hour in the world unseen! and what a thrill, as of a penetrating light, shall run through the dust where the saints are sleeping! When was there such a day-spring since the time when 'God said, let there be light, and there was light?' He shall come, and all his shining ones; ten thousand times ten thousand, whose countenances are 'like lightning,' and their 'raiment white as snow;' all the heavenly court, angels, archangels, cherubim, and seraphim, clad in unimaginable splen-

dours; and the righteous shall arise from the grave, and the earth shall be lightened with their glory; they shall stretch forth their hands to meet Him, and bow themselves before the brightness of His coming. O blessed hour, after all the sorrows, and wrongs, and falsehoods, and darkness, and burdens of life, to see Him face to face; to be made sinless; to shine with an exceeding strength; to be as the light, in which there 'is no darkness at all!' Be this our hope, our chiefest toil, our almost only prayer."

"Eternal Hope, when yonder spheres sublime
Peal'd their first notes to sound the march of Time,
Thy joyous youth began, but not to fade:
When all the solar planets have decay'd;
When wrapt in fire, the realms of ether glow,
And Heaven's last thunder shakes the world below;
Thou undismay'd shalt o'er the ruins smile,
And light thy torch at Nature's funeral pile."

END OF THE SEVENTH VOLUME.

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